
Chautauqua County Community Needs Assessment

2023

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.

Chautauqua Opportunities
for Development, Inc.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This Community Needs Assessment is the result of many hours of data collection and review by the staff and management of Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. We extend our sincere appreciation to the countless individuals and agencies who participated in the information gathering process, either through direct communication or online resources. Contributors include local government agencies and nonprofits, other community partners, customers, and other members of the community. Thank you to all who participated.

MISSION STATEMENTS

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.

...leading the fight against poverty by mobilizing resources and creating partnerships to promote empowerment, economic independence and opportunities.

Helping people ... changing lives.

Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc.

...leading the fight against poverty by mobilizing resources and creating partnerships to promote and create economic independence through business development and opportunities.

Helping businesses ... creating opportunities.

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Introduction

Agency Profile

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) is a not-for-profit Community Action Agency that has served low- and moderate-income residents in Chautauqua County, NY since 1965. The agency's services are intended to help vulnerable households achieve stability and economic security. An affiliate corporation, Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI) was formed in 2002 to provide new and existing small businesses with technical assistance and access to financing. COI and CODI serve over 3,400 households annually.

COI has implemented a comprehensive, asset-focused anti-poverty model that is evidence-based. Each customer household's situation is assessed at intake using a Family Development Matrix that has been confirmed for validity and reliability by the University at Buffalo Program Evaluation Center. The Matrices assess households across 26 life domains that include housing, education, income, employment, physical health, mental health, childcare, and others. These assessments are the basis for the development of a life plan with short-term and long-term goals that will lead the household toward self-sufficiency. All COI services for which the household is eligible are included in the plan, in addition to referrals to external services that will help them achieve their goals. Subsequent assessments are compared to the baseline assessment to measure progress, and the plan is continually updated as households achieve milestones toward their goals. The Family Development Matrix is based on the ROMA model of service delivery (Results Oriented Management and Accountability).



County Profile

Chautauqua County, NY is a rural county in the southwestern corner of New York State that borders Lake Erie, the counties of Erie and Cattaraugus in NY, and the State of Pennsylvania. The two Cities of Dunkirk and Jamestown sit at the northern and southern ends, separated by smaller towns and villages. Chautauqua County is one of fourteen NY State counties that form the upper boundary of the Appalachian Region, an area recognized by the federal government as having high rates of poverty and fewer economic opportunities than other areas of the country.

The county is rich in natural resources that beautify the landscape and draw visitors to recreational opportunities such as boating in the summer and skiing in the winter. Much of the geographic area is characterized by agricultural land that supports livestock and dairy farms, as well as a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The manufacturing base, while not as robust as the industrial environment of the past, still exists mainly in the more urbanized areas. In addition to manufacturing, the majority of jobs are in the educational, health care, social services, and retail sectors. Educational institutions in the county offer undergraduate and advanced degrees, as well as certificate and trade programs.

While the majority of Chautauqua County residents have stable or thriving financial situations, a large percentage of the population faces challenges that prevent them from living their best lives. According to the 2016 – 2020 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 17.8% of individuals in the county live below the poverty level (21,722 individuals). Across New York State, 13.6% of individuals live in poverty, meaning the county is worse off economically than the state in general.

Using 2022 federal poverty guidelines, a household that includes four persons who collectively earn \$27,750 or less are considered poor by federal government standards. But what about those who earn just a little bit more, but still struggle to make ends meet? In addition to those living below 100% of poverty in Chautauqua County, another 13,485 individuals earn between 100% and 150% of poverty, or between \$27,751 and \$41,626 for a 4-member household. Poverty thresholds are based on a very basic household budget that does not take into consideration costs such as child care and health care,

which are often determining factors in an individual's ability to work. In reality, many county residents have characteristics of the "working poor", those who are employed but do not make enough money to be financially self-sufficient. Often, their incomes are too high to meet eligibility requirements for public assistance programs, but insufficient for providing necessities for the household.

A Living Wage Calculator has been developed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that takes into account a more realistic budget for basic necessities, as well as geographic location. The Living Wage is a minimum income standard that would be needed for the household to be self-sufficient with no dependence on public assistance programs. To earn a Living Wage in Chautauqua County, a family of two adults and two children (ages 4 and 9) would need to have both adults working full-time jobs and earning at least \$23.17 per hour each. This would put the household income at \$84,339 annually, about three times the federal poverty threshold for a family of four.

At any time, any of us can be affected by poverty. A sudden event such as the loss of a job, divorce, death, or illness can throw any household into a crisis situation that could have long-term impacts on the stability of the household. The stress and anxiety caused by poverty is detrimental to mental and physical health of individuals and can have long term effects on well-being. Chautauqua County has subpopulations of elderly and disabled residents that are higher than state averages, creating further challenges for these individuals related to their ability to be financially stable and to access available services.

Purpose of the Community Needs Assessment

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. conducts a Community Needs Assessment every three years as part of its ongoing management and strategic planning processes. This document looks at various aspects of life in Chautauqua County to explore the needs of residents and identify potential service gaps. Because of the significant effects of the Covid-19 health pandemic that affected every community in the United States, an update to the agency's 2020 Community Needs Assessment was published in early 2022.



Methodology

COI's 2023 Community Needs Assessment uses data from a wide variety of local, regional, state, and federal sources to develop an analysis of socio-economic trends in housing, employment, health, transportation, public safety, technology, child care, and youth. In addition to quantitative data, this assessment has also captured qualitative data through surveys of county residents (Appendix I), input from COI's Board of Directors (Appendix II), as well as through quarterly Community Council sessions (Appendix III) that provide insight into specific needs and community perceptions. COI staff members worked in groups to collect and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to the chapter to which they were assigned. They used the information gathered to summarize the strengths and challenges associated with each chapter topic, and to make recommendations for improvement.

This Community Needs Assessment explores both the strengths and challenges that relate to the complex issue of poverty in Chautauqua County. The chapters that follow provide an analysis of the conditions that exist in Chautauqua County that impact the ability of its residents to be self-sustaining and economically secure. Data is provided for many of the factors that come into play for helping people out of poverty, as well as comparisons with state and regional averages. It is our hope that it will be useful in guiding strategies to respond to needs and conditions in Chautauqua County over the next three years.

POPULATION AND POVERTY ESTIMATES

Population Estimates, Chautauqua County

	Number	Percent
Total Population	127,584	
Gender		
Males	62,961	49.3
Females	64,623	50.7
Race		
One Race	123,748	97.0
White	116,046	91.0
Black/African American	3,437	2.7
American Indian/Alaskan Native	332	0.3
Asian	679	0.5
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	59	0.0
Some other race	3,195	2.5
Two or More Races	3,836	3.0
Ethnicity		
Hispanic (of any race)	9,817	7.7

Population by Age, Chautauqua County

	#	%
Age Groups		
Under 5 Years	6,968	5.5
5 to 9	6,811	5.3
10 to 14	7,547	5.9
15 to 19	8,880	7.0
20 to 24	7,985	6.3
25 to 34	14,992	11.7
35 to 44	13,499	10.6
45 to 54	15,936	12.5
55 to 59	9,625	7.5
60 to 64	9,694	7.6
65 to 74	14,374	11.2
75 to 84	7,401	5.8
85 and over	3,872	3.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2020 American Community Survey

Percent of Population at Specific Levels of Poverty

	Total	Less Than 50%	Less Than 100%	Less than 125%
By Gender				
Males	60,069	7.3	16.7	20.9
Females	62,244	7.6	18.8	24.0
By Age				
Under 18 years	25,327	10.5	26.7	32.4
18 to 64 years	72,267	10.1	26.2	24.0
65 years and over	24,719	2.9	9.1	14.4
By Race				
One Race				
White	112,609	6.9	16.5	20.9
Black/African American	2,331	16.6	42.2	49.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	321	13.1	43.3	47.7
Asian	594	4.0	18.5	38.4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	44	0.0	0.0	0.0
Some other race	2,779	15.8	26.0	33.3
Two or More Races	3,635	14.3	32.5	39.7
Ethnicity				
Hispanic (of any race)	60,069	7.3	16.7	20.9
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	62,244	7.6	18.8	24.0

1. Economic Development and Employment

INTRODUCTION

At the root of any community’s needs is the condition of the local economy. A robust job market and high level of sales spurs on asset development and reduces poverty. Likewise, economic downturns lead to a lack of hiring and lower investment, causing other problems to manifest. Chautauqua County’s economy is anchored by industries that have seen great growth in recent years as well as some that have experienced hardships. Employment in the county is a similar story, as jobs have been added in certain fields but a lack of other opportunities persists, for young workers in particular.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

The population in Chautauqua County that is age 16 and over totals 104,675, per the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2020 American Community Survey (ACS). The county has a 56.5% labor force participation rate, which is the percentage of this population in the labor force (59,143). Census data indicate that 83.3% of the labor force works within Chautauqua County, 11.7% works in another NYS county, and 5.0% works in another state. The average commute time for all workers who do not work from home is 18.5 minutes.

Many of those who work or are able to work, however, do not work full-time positions. According to the U.S. Census ACS, 53.8% of all people ages 16 to 64 usually worked 35 or more hours per week, but 17.7% worked between 15 and 34 hours per week, and 26.8% did not work at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a drastic impact on unemployment in both Chautauqua County and New York State as a whole. According to the ACS, in January 2019 the unemployment rate was 5.7%. In January of 2020, the rate remained at 5.7%. The unemployment rate spiked to 8.8% in January of 2021, and then decreased to 4.7% in January of 2022. Although the unemployment rate has decreased, there is still 43.5% of the labor force that is not currently employed for a variety of reasons.

Industry

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Chautauqua County had a total of 3,112 employer establishments in 2021. This number represents a 10-year change of -101 employer establishments, or -3.01%. These establishments provided 44,705 total jobs in Chautauqua County. The largest industries by numbers of employees are: Manufacturing (8,030), Health Care and Social Services (6,701), Retail Trade (5,784), Educational Services (4,297) and Accommodation and Food Services

Chart 1.1 Unemployment Rates

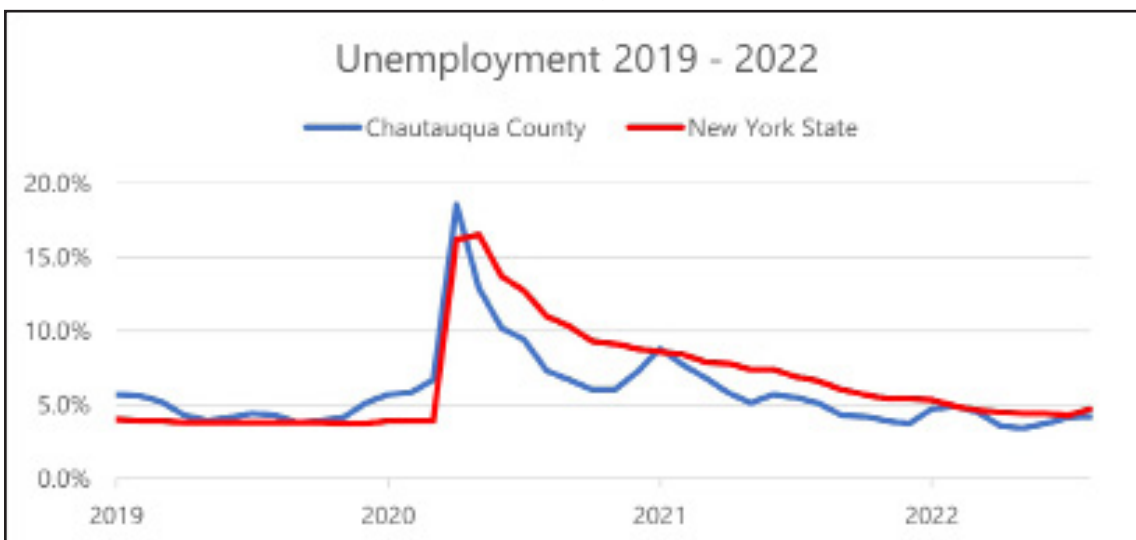


Table 1.1 Percent of Households in Chautauqua County by Income

	All Households	Family Households	Non-Family Households
Total number of households	53,625	32,567	21,058
Annual Income:			
< \$10,000	6.7%	4.2%	11.7%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	7.1%	3.5%	13.4%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	12.9%	7.8%	21.3%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	10.3%	8.2%	14.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	14.4%	13.8%	15.2%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	18.1%	21.8%	12.5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12.0%	15.8%	5.0%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	13.1%	17.7%	4.4%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	3.3%	4.5%	0.9%
> \$200,000	2.1%	2.6%	1.1%

(4,273). The county has placed an emphasis on continuing to grow in the sectors of manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism in recent years.

While the trend of declining manufacturing jobs seen throughout the United States over the last several decades is true in Chautauqua County, the 175 manufacturing businesses in Chautauqua County continue to employ over 8,000 individuals in the industry. Local facilities such as those operated by Cummins (diesel engines), Nestle Purina (pet food), Fieldbrook Foods (ice cream) and SKF (bearings) boast global recognition and are leaders in their industry.

However, the industry is not without its hardships. For example, the manufacturer Truck-Lite announced in 2021 it was moving its Falconer headquarters to Pennsylvania - and with it about 100 jobs - after more than 60 years in Chautauqua County, according to the Jamestown Post-Journal. Fieldbrook Foods, a subsidiary of Wells Enterprises, announced it will begin laying off nearly 320 employees at its ice cream plant in Dunkirk at the end of 2022. The Iowa-based Wells Enterprises confirmed in July that it planned to “scale back operations” next year by reducing its production lines from about 20 to five, according to the Dunkirk Observer.

The 175 manufacturing businesses in Chautauqua County include general, metal, tool and die businesses that manufacture items including furniture, engine components, processed food and beverages. The County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency describes

manufacturing in the county as remaining “strong”, with new companies emerging. Americold Logistics, LLC, which owns and operates temperature-controlled warehouses across the U.S., opened a 181,000-square-foot cold storage and distribution center in the Town of Dunkirk in 2022, according to the Observer. The facility will serve Fieldbrook Foods Inc.

Organizations such as the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, the County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency, the Small Business Development Center, Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc., and the Manufacturer’s Association of the Southern Tier provide guidance and support for individuals hoping to start a new business and promote economic strength and networking in Chautauqua County.

The WNY P-TECH STEM College & Career Academy, located in Dunkirk, offers a project-based, differentiated learning culture with specialized educators working in tandem with higher education, business partners and school districts. Students work to earn NYS Regents Diplomas and A.A.S. Degrees in Mechatronics, Welding Technology, or Mechanical Technology with specialization in CADD or machine tool from Jamestown Community College.

Chautauqua County is a center for agriculture, with chief farm products including dairy, grapes, cattle, vegetables, other fruits, timber, and maple. According to the 2020 Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Annual Report, the CCE agriculture teams provide cutting edge research and education to Chautauqua County’s 1,228 farms, operating on 223,634 acres with a total market value of \$639,035,000 (land, equipment, machinery) and generates annually over \$161 million/year for the local economy. The USDA’s 2017 Census of Agriculture Report lists Chautauqua County sixth in crop sales (\$73.3MM) and thirteenth in Livestock, Poultry and Products sales (\$87.7MM) in New York State.

The grape industry in particular is prominent in Chautauqua County. According to the Chautauqua Chamber of Commerce, the county’s proximity to Lake Erie provides a fertile climate for about 800 growers that produce 150,000 tons or more of grapes, which are processed locally for juice, wine, jellies, and other products that are sold worldwide. It is estimated that the grape industry in the Lake Erie Grape Belt region supports about 2,000 direct jobs and over 5,000 jobs in fruit and vegetable processing, with a total economic impact of over \$300 million to the region.

Chautauqua County is situated in the center of Lake Erie Wine Country with over 20,000 acres of vineyards

and several wineries located along the shoreline of Lake Erie. In fact, Chautauqua County is the largest U.S. grape-cultivating region east of the Rockies and the largest global Concord growing region. The region also boasts the Grape Discovery Center in Westfield, NY, the official Visitor's Center for the Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt.



A record-high 265.5 million visitors enjoyed New York State in 2019, spending \$73.6 billion and generating an economic impact of \$117.6 billion. The travel and tourism industry in Chautauqua County is a substantial and growing component of the economy, spurred by the continued success of established destinations such as the Chautauqua Institution, Lake Erie Wine Trail and the National Comedy Center.

According to chqgov.com, after declines in tourism and visitation in 2020 as a result of travel-related restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 occupancy tax revenues exceeded expectations by nearly 40% with revenues exceeding budget by more than \$500,000. Revenues exceeded 2019 levels (before the pandemic) by 5.4%. "2021 was a very solid year for tourism in Chautauqua County amid the uncertainty of the pandemic," said Andrew Nixon, Executive Director of the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau.

Situated on Chautauqua Lake, the mission of Chautauqua Institution is "dedicated to the exploration of the best in human values and the enrichment of life through a program that explores the important religious, social and political issues of our times; stimulates provocative, thoughtful involvement of individuals and families in creative response to such issues; and promotes excellence and creativity in the appreciation, performance and teaching of the arts."

The National Comedy Center opened in 2018 in Jamestown and serves as a destination museum devoted to the world of comedy. Ranked as one of the "World's Greatest Places" by TIME magazine in 2019, the National Comedy Center features an extensive collection of

comedy artifacts, interactive multimedia displays, and other exhibits that highlight particular comedians, films, comedy styles, and more. The annual Lucille Ball Comedy Festival that takes place in Jamestown every August also brings popular and up-and-coming comedians to the city for live performances. The Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum in Jamestown honors the legacy of its namesake comedians and the role the pair played on television and in film.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

As part of the 2016-2017 New York State budget, legislation was signed sanctioning a plan for gradual increases in the minimum wage rate. The first rounds of wage increases went into effect in 2016 and are scheduled to continue until the state minimum wage reaches \$15 per hour. The NYS minimum wage rate increased by \$1.00 on December 31, 2022 to \$14.20 an hour. Employer location and size are also a factor in determining wage increase rates and schedules. According to 2022 Observer editorial, "...increasing the minimum wage would put more money in people's pockets. It could also put more people out of work if companies are forced to make cuts. A higher minimum wage may decrease poverty rates, but also mean fewer businesses to employ people."

Chautauqua County, through the auspices of its Industrial Development Agency, is actively facilitating development by attracting new businesses while promoting the retention and expansion of existing businesses. Incentives which include tax abatements, low interest loans, energy rebates and credits, shovel-ready sites, and a technology incubator, enhance the opportunities for job creation and retention. The Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency has been successful in creating several 'shovel-ready sites' throughout the region to attract more business and economic opportunities to the county.

Several groups in the county actively promote the area to businesses and individuals. These include the Local Development Corporations in the Cities of Jamestown and Dunkirk and the Villages of Silver Creek and Westfield, the Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency, the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, six community Chambers of Commerce, the Chadwick Bay Regional Development Corporation, and the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau. Recent efforts by many of these groups have focused on marketing agri-tourism in the area, including the numerous Farmer's Markets, Lake Erie Wine Country, and the Grape Discovery Center.

Chautauqua Works, with offices in Jamestown and Dunkirk, offers area employers workforce services such as the ability to post job vacancies on the New York State Job Bank, application intake, pre-screening of prospective candidates and training resources. Individuals seeking employment opportunities are provided with various job search websites to better connect them to employers.

The Fredonia Technology Incubator in Dunkirk “promotes economic growth by supporting entrepreneurship and the development of new, innovative, companies into successful business ventures.” Space is provided for start-up and established businesses as well as for educational events such as workshops for aspiring entrepreneurs.

START-UP NY is an incentive program that allows new and expanding businesses to operate tax-free for 10 years on or near eligible university or college campuses, with SUNY at Fredonia and Jamestown Community College among them. Businesses must create new jobs and contribute to the local economy in order to be eligible for incentives, which include the elimination of state tax liability, the reduction or elimination of an organization tax, and more.

A Chautauqua County Education Coalition was formed in 2018 as an initiative of the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturer’s Association of the Southern Tier, and the “Dream It Do It WNY” campaign. Dream It Do It was formed as part of New York State’s Regional Economic Council initiative to promote apprenticeships and careers in advanced manufacturing to K-12 students across the region. The local Coalition was formed to promote STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education to meet the workforce requirements of local employers.

Accredited higher education options in Chautauqua County include the State University of NY at Fredonia, Jamestown Community College (JCC) and Jamestown Business College (JBC). SUNY Fredonia is a liberal arts university that offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees and advanced certificate programs. JCC is a SUNY school that offers transferable two-year degree programs and certification courses in over 40 disciplines. JBC offers business-focused associate and bachelor degree programs. In 2017, New York State implemented the Excelsior Scholarship program that allows individuals with household incomes below \$125,000 to attend a SUNY school tuition-free. Recipients must be NY State residents and must agree to reside in NY State following graduation for the length of time they participated in the scholarship program.

Chautauqua County is moving in the direction of

renewable sources of energy utilizing solar and wind. Numerous solar projects have been approved and provide tax incentives through the Chautauqua County Industrial Development Association (CCIDA). Several solar projects are being planned throughout the county, with the largest in Ripley. Known as the South Ripley Solar Project, ConnectGen expects to install up to 270 megawatts (MW) of solar with a 20 MW battery storage component in the area, which has the potential to power over 60,000 homes in New York State annually. It will provide more than \$190,000 annually in increased property tax revenue to Chautauqua County, totaling more than \$7.8 million over the project’s life.

Given the county’s location along Lake Erie, several wind turbines have been installed in the past few years at scattered sites throughout the county for homes, businesses, and farms. The county also sits entirely within the Marcellus Shale formation that produces natural gas. New developments that utilize natural resources to produce energy could lead to job creation as well as decreased costs to homeowners, businesses, and municipalities.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS



Respondents to COI’s 2022 Community Needs Survey (see Appendix I) were asked questions regarding income, employment and business. Of those responding, 62.5% stated that their income meets their basic needs, leaving 37.5% stating that their income is not sufficient.

In regard to employment, survey takers were asked about the most common barriers to obtaining or maintaining full-time employment for people in Chautauqua County. The most common barrier among responders was child care at 60.42%, followed by lack of transportation at 52.08%, and an overall lack of full-time job opportunities at 28.33%. Other common responses included rate of pay and a lack of motivation and willingness to work.

Another question asked about the primary challenges for people interested in establishing a business in Chautauqua County. The biggest challenge identified was high taxes and fees, (62.92%), followed by the lack of available financing (54.17%), and the inability to obtain credit/poor credit score (43.33%).

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- There are several local development corporations and other groups in the county who continue to promote the area to businesses and individuals. The area is marketed proactively in sectors where there are strong local assets on which to build. These include recreation, tourism, agri-business, and food processing.
- The county has natural resources that can be used for energy production, including natural gas and nearly constant winds due to its position along Lake Erie.
- The county's soil and climate are ideal for producing Concord grapes, as well as several varieties of wine grapes. This adds to local food production and tourism in the area, as well as employment opportunities.
- Several organizations exist within Chautauqua County to provide workforce training and human resource development, including SUNY Fredonia's Career Development Office, Jamestown Community College and its Manufacturer Technology Institute, Chautauqua Works, Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES, the P-TECH STEM College and Career Academy, and the Chautauqua County Education Coalition. Economic development organizations in the county also provide education on entrepreneurship.

CHALLENGES

- Young working age people and displaced workers continue to leave the county in search of better paying jobs, which impacts the ability of local employers ability to attract and retain qualified employees.
- Employers have difficulty filling positions that require specialized skills or higher education.

COVID-19 has intensified this issue, as many employees who left the workforce during the pandemic did not return.

- Multiple layers of government on the local, state and federal levels increase the tax burden for households and businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Economic Development Corporations should continue to pursue investment in successful industries such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.
- Make Chautauqua County an attractive place for businesses to invest in and expand by reducing tax burdens for both new and existing businesses and providing financial assistance.
- Increase training and education opportunities relevant to the local workforce to allow for advancement and increased wages.
- Increase support, education, and training for entrepreneurs in the county interested in starting their own business.



2. Housing

INTRODUCTION

For any family, having high quality, safe and affordable housing helps to form the foundation of their financial and physical health. Housing that is unsafe can create both long-term and short-term health issues. Housing that is unaffordable can lead to financial instability, and it often perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

In Chautauqua County, housing presents both opportunities and challenges. Relatively low home values make homeownership affordable to much of the county's population. Since a home is a long-term asset that retains its value over time, the county's homeownership rate of 68.6% bodes well for the financial health of county residents. On the other hand, many renters are struggling with an income that does not adequately cover the cost of housing, which has led to a rise in homelessness in the county. An aging housing stock also presents challenges as the cost of repairs is prohibitive to many residents and the environmental risks impact health. Developing strategies that build off the county's strengths and address these challenges will be crucial to improving the housing conditions in the county.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

Housing values

Median home values in Chautauqua County are considerably lower than New York State and national home values, as illustrated in **Table 2.1**. In Chautauqua County in 2020, the median home value for owner-occupied units with a mortgage was \$92,200 (per the U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-year estimates), which is approximately 27% of the \$343,700 median home value in the state and half of the \$251,700 median value in the U.S. For the country, home values increased by 7% between 2017 and 2020, which was after a slight decrease in value between 2014 and 2017. The local trends indicate that Chautauqua County home values are less affected by national trends than other markets and have not been subject to the market volatility that some markets experience.

Table 2.1 Median Home Values

	Chautauqua County	NY	US
2010	\$79,600	\$303,900	\$188,400
2014	\$84,100	\$283,700	\$175,700
2017	\$85,800	\$293,000	\$193,500
2020	\$92,200	\$343,700	\$251,700

Homeownership rates

As seen in **Table 2.2**, homeownership rates are strong in Chautauqua County compared to New York State and national rates. The county's homeownership rate of 68.6% is higher than the rates for both New York (54.1%) and the nation (64.4%) per the U.S. Census. Local homeownership rates have decreased by 1.4% since 2017. New York State saw a slight increase in its homeownership rate of 0.1% and the country saw a more significant increase of 0.6% since 2017.

Table 2.2 Occupied Units by Owner/Renter

Chautauqua County				
	2010	2014	2017	2020
Owner-occupied	68.0%	69.9%	70.0%	68.6%
Renter-occupied	32.0%	30.1%	30.0%	31.4%
New York State				
	2010	2014	2017	2020
Owner-occupied	53.3%	53.8%	54.0%	54.1%
Renter-occupied	46.7%	46.2%	46.0%	45.9%
United States				
	2010	2014	2017	2020
Owner-occupied	65.1%	64.4%	63.8%	64.4%
Renter-occupied	34.9%	35.6%	36.2%	35.6%

Source: Factfinder2.gov, U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010 and 2020, and ACS 2017 5-year estimate

Affordability of Homeownership

Rural communities often display higher rates of homeownership than urban areas, and Chautauqua County's homeownership rate of 68.6% is consistent with this pattern. By owning a home, residents have a financial

asset that will retain its value if maintained. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability for families to afford housing. The average interest rate for a 30-year mortgage initially dropped during the pandemic rose rapidly afterward. Between September 2021 and September 2022, the average interest rate more than doubled, from 2.88% to 6.29% (FreddieMac). This increase poses a significant barrier for first time homebuyers, as it raises the calculated monthly payment by hundreds of dollars. The prices of homes have since increased, and the long term impact of homeownership rates will be seen over the next few years.

Due to the higher cost of homes in 2022, families and individuals are seeking out financial assistance more than ever. First-time homebuyer programs can assist with opening the door to more homebuyers. The Homebuyer Dream Program available through member banks of the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York provides up to \$9,500 in down payment and closing cost assistance to income eligible households, while the First Front Door Program from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh provides up to \$5,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance; both are available in Chautauqua County, but funding is limited and goes very quickly. Affordable mortgage products such as FHA loans, SONYMA loans, and USDA 502 Direct Loans also provide favorable rates and features for income eligible households.



Foreclosure Rates

According to Realtytrac and the US. Census Bureau, 1% of owner occupied homes (or 347) in Chautauqua County are in pre-foreclosure status. New York State has a higher rate of 1.7% or 71,664 owner occupied homes that are in pre-foreclosure status. According to Realtytrac, the communities in Chautauqua County experiencing

the highest rates of mortgage foreclosures in 2022 are Jamestown, Dunkirk and Westfield. Foreclosures are often the result of other challenges experienced by residents in the county, namely loss of income and low assets, and are also the cause of further financial hardship. Other households face the challenge of tax foreclosure due to insufficient funds to pay annual taxes. Preventing foreclosures helps residents stabilize their housing and maintain any equity they have accrued in their home.

Age of Housing Stock

Chautauqua County has some of the oldest housing in the state and the country. According to the U.S. Census 2020 ACS, the majority of homes in Chautauqua County were built between 1940 -1979, as seen in **Table 2.3**. 38.7% of the county’s homes were built before 1939, compared to 31.7% for New York and 12.4% for the nation. Only 1.9% of the county’s homes were built since 2010, which is much less than the rest of the state and country. In the county, 78.2% of homes were built in 1979 or earlier, which is around the time that lead-based paint was determined to be a health hazard and discontinued.

Table 2.3: Percent of Housing Units by Year Built

Year Built	Chautauqua County	NY	U.S.
2010 or later	1.9%	3.3%	6.2%
1980 to 2009	19.9%	20.0%	40.9%
1940 to 1979	39.5%	45.0%	40.5%
1939 or earlier	38.7%	31.7%	12.4%

Source: Factfinder, U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey

Utilities

In upstate New York, winter temperatures require renters and homeowners to heat their housing for extended periods of time. Chautauqua County has an aging housing stock, and much of it is not energy efficient. Low-income renters often live in the oldest housing stock that is the least energy efficient, and therefore bear a disproportionate burden of energy expenses. Energy costs have risen between 2019 and 2022, with electric costs rising from 17.3 cents per Kilowatt-hour to 21.0 cents per Kilowatt hour, and natural gas rising from \$12.24 per 1,000 cubic feet to \$13.83 per 1,000 cubic feet. In 2022, multiple global variables have created inflation and increased energy prices. If this trend continues, subsequent increases will have a significant negative impact on lower-income households.

Table 2.4 Average Retail Price for Energy in NY

	Jan 2016	Jan 2019	Jan 2022
Electric (cents/Kilowatt-hr)	16.5	17.3	21.0
Natural Gas (\$/1,000 cubic ft)	10.30	12.24	13.83

Source: NYSERDA/ U.S. DOE, Energy Information Administration

Rental Affordability

For the majority of households, housing costs are the single highest expense. For lower income households, particularly renters, housing costs can be a disproportionate amount of the household budget. The Department of Housing and Urban Development considers households that pay more than 30% of their income as gross rent as rent-burdened (gross rent is the amount of contract rent plus the cost of utilities or fuels if these are paid by the renter). Rent-burdened households can find it challenging to meet other basic needs. They are often unable to effectively build assets and work toward financial mobility, because their housing expenses represent such a large percentage of their income.

In Chautauque County, rent-burdened households (those for whom gross rent takes up more than 30% of their income) make up 50.4% of the rental population, with another 19.2% of renters paying between 20% and 29.9% of their household income towards their gross rent. The percentage of rent burdened households in Chautauque County is slightly higher than the national percentage (49.1%) and slightly lower than the state's percentage (51.5%).

Table 2.5 Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income

	Percentage of Renters		
	Chautauque County	NY	U.S.
Less than 20%	30.4%	26.1%	26.3%
20.0 - 29.9%	19.2%	22.4%	24.6%
30% or more	50.4%	51.5%	49.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2015-2020

Homeless Population Demographics

The greatest housing challenges in Chautauque County are experienced by homeless households. While there are fewer visible "street" homeless persons, there are many homeless persons and families in Chautauque County. Homeless persons in Chautauque County tend to include female-headed households, veterans, runaway youth, single men and women, and domestic violence survivors, but homelessness can affect people across age, gender, or racial and ethnic boundaries.

The Chautauque County Homeless Coalition serves as the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) for the county. The Coalition works to coordinate a continuum of services to prevent and respond to homelessness. Chautauque Opportunities, Inc. is the lead agency for the Coalition, with membership including housing agencies (Southern Tier Environments for Living, Inc., Recovery Options Made Easy, the Dunkirk Housing Authority, and Evergreen), shelters (UCAN City Mission in Jamestown, the Salvation Army), community service and relief groups (Community Helping Hands, the American Red Cross), government agencies (Chautauque County Department of Health and Human Services, City of Jamestown Department of Development), organizations serving youth or students (Chautauque County Youth Bureau, Erie-2 Chautauque Cattaraugus BOCES), and more.

In 2021, per the Chautauque County Homeless Coalition's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), there were 1,047 enrollments in homeless services in Chautauque County, an increase from 823 in 2020 and 885 in 2019. Of the 1,047 enrollments in 2021, 86% of individuals entered from a situation where they were either literally homeless, or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Of the 1,047, approximately 51% were male and 44% were female, while 1.6% were veterans. In 2020, the majority of homeless persons were White; however, African Americans (12.6%) and Hispanics (20.4%) were disproportionately affected by homelessness compared to the percentage of these populations in the total population.

Youth homelessness continues to be a problem that the Chautauque County Homeless Coalition works to combat.

Table 2.6 Chautauque Co. Homeless Population by Gender

Year	Total	Male	Female	Transgender
2019	885	56.1%	43.2%	0.5%
2020	823	55.2%	43.9%	0.7%
2021	1,047	51.4%	44.4%	0.5%

Table 2.7 Veterans in Chautauqua Co. Homeless Population

Year	Number of Veterans	% Homeless Pop.
2019	28	3.1%
2020	23	2.8%
2021	17	1.6%

Table 2.8 Chautauqua County Homeless Population by Race and Ethnicity

	2019	2020	2021
White	87.1%	76.3%	72.9%
Black or African American	9.0%	12.6%	12.8%
Other	3.9%	11.1%	14.3%
Hispanic/Latino	21.7%	20.4%	18.1%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	78.3%	79.6%	81.9%

Source of all homeless data: Chautauqua County Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Homeless youth in particular are at risk for becoming victims of human trafficking, and every effort should be made to house youth in appropriate shelters when their homelessness becomes apparent. The numbers of homeless youth recorded in the Chautauqua County HMIS are illustrated in **Table 2.9**. Homeless youth numbers are included in the total homeless numbers discussed previously.

Table 2.9 Youth Homelessness

	2019	2020	2021
Unaccompanied youth: Ages 18 and under	74	58	62
Unaccompanied youth: Ages 18-24	45	20	17
Total unaccompanied homeless youth	119	78	79
Homeless youth in a family unit	204	215	222
Total Number of Homeless Youth	323	293	301

Numbers in Table 2.9 are a subset of the total homeless numbers in Table 2.6.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

Homeownership Trends

Homeownership rates have slightly decreased from 70%

in 2017, to 68.6% in 2020 in Chautauqua County. This can largely be attributed to the higher sale prices that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Chautauqua County has a lower median income per the U.S. Census Bureau (\$48,315) than New York State (\$71,117) or the country (\$64,994), an index comparing median income as a percentage of median home values presents a positive picture for the affordability of homeownership in the county.

Affordable Housing Trends

Median Gross Rents continue to rise in Chautauqua County as well as the nation and state. In Chautauqua County, gross rents rose by \$44 from 2017 to 2020. This increase is roughly proportional to increases in the cost of living and does not reflect major changes in the housing market. Even so, the percentage of rent-burdened households in the county decreased by 3.8% from 2017 to 2020, indicating that household income outpaced median gross rents.

Table 2.10 Trend in Median Gross Rent

	Chautauqua Co.	NY	U.S.
2014	\$611	\$1,117	\$920
2017	\$631	\$1,194	\$982
2020	\$675	\$1,315	\$1,096

Table 2.11 Trend in Rent-Burdened Households

	Chautauqua Co.	NY	U.S.
2014	50.8%	53.9%	52.3%
2017	52.9%	53.5%	50.6%
2020	49.1%	53.2%	53.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates

Homelessness Trends

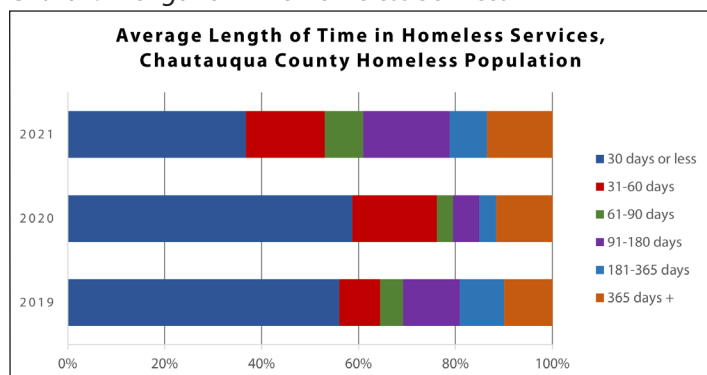
The total number of homeless or at-risk of homelessness persons recorded in Chautauqua County rose from 823 in 2020 to 1,047 in 2021. These numbers include homeless individuals who were living on the street, in emergency shelters, in transitional housing, placed in permanent housing, or who were at-risk of homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on homelessness. From March 2020 to January 2022, New York State maintained a moratorium on residential evictions under the Tenant Safe Harbor Act. During this time period, both the total number of homeless

individuals and the length of time homeless individuals stayed in shelter increased. Locally, homeless individuals stayed in local shelters or motels longer due to the lack of available rental units. Since the end of the eviction moratorium on 01/15/2022, the number of those being evicted continues to increase.

The chart below shows the average length of time that individuals remain enrolled in programs that provide homeless services. Some homeless services, such as emergency shelter, are intended as short-term emergency services. Others, such as permanent supportive housing, are designed for long-term stays. **Chart 2.1** displays a decrease in the number of homeless individuals who were housed 30 days or less and an increase in all other lengths of homelessness between 2019 and 2021. The data reflects an increase in the length of time that homeless individuals are staying in emergency shelters.

Chart 2.1 Length of Time Homeless Services



Source: Chautauqua County Homeless Coalition - HMIS 2022

Another trend is the heavy reliance on area motels as homeless shelters. While Chautauqua County has homeless shelters that serve particular populations, such as youth or domestic violence survivors, there is no all-purpose homeless shelter that serves all homeless individuals or families. When there are no beds available to accommodate a homeless person or persons, the Chautauqua County DHHS may provide a voucher enabling them to stay in a nearby hotel or motel. This provides for the basic need of housing, but due to the location of the motels and the lack of supportive services onsite, it is a less than ideal option for homeless services. It is also more expensive for the county government to pay for motel vouchers compared to the typical cost of placing homeless persons in a homeless shelter.

The increased numbers of homeless persons has pushed both shelter and motel beds to their capacity. In 2022, three local agencies are working on building new

shelter sites. Chautauqua Opportunities Inc., is in process of developing a shelter for single women in Jamestown. UCAN-City Mission, an organization that runs a men's shelter, is in the process of developing a family shelter. The local Domestic Violence Shelter, the Salvation Army Anew Center, is also working on opening a new shelter site. These facilities will help add capacity to emergency shelter options once completed. In the short-term, homeless providers are facing a lack of shelter space and an increase in street homelessness.

In the fall of 2022, the Chautauqua County Homeless Coalition and the City of Jamestown engaged the faith-based community in addressing the immediate need for emergency shelter. A series of community meetings were held to explain the need and request support. In response, a local church and a local non-profit were identified to establish Code Blue overnight warming centers. These centers are projected to be open by January 2023 and will provide emergency shelter for the remainder of the winter.

Subsidized Housing

Chautauqua County has a number of affordable housing developers and subsidized housing providers. Subsidies increase the affordability of rental housing for low-income households. According to standards set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, households in subsidized housing contribute no more than 30% of their income to pay rent. In Chautauqua County, subsidized housing is provided by public housing authorities, privately owned units developed with low income housing tax credits (LIHTC), and housing vouchers used in coordination with private landlords. Some of the major subsidized housing units can be found at Lindwood Apartments, Carroll Manor, Springwood Apartments, Collins Manor, Mayville Senior Apartments, Arrowhead Apartments, Second Street Apartments, Euclid Gardens, Chadakoin Centre Gardens, Fredonia Commons, and Appleyard Terrace Townhomes.

Environmental Risks

Chautauqua County's aging housing stock is likely to contain environmental hazards. Lead-based paint was used for residential purposes until 1978. Approximately 80% of properties in the county contain structures that were built while lead-based paint was still widely being used (2020 American Community Survey). The ingestion of lead-based paint particles by children under 6 is known to have significant negative physiological

and developmental impacts. From 2017-2019 the average elevated blood-lead level rate of children who were tested in Chautauqua County was 21.3 per 1,000, compared to 3.8 per 1,000 of tested children across New York State (New York Department of Health CHIRS Report 2017-2019). In simple terms, the rate of elevated blood-lead test results for children under 6 in Chautauqua County is 5 times higher than the state average for the 3-year period. On October 1, 2019, NYS lowered the threshold for what is considered an elevated blood-lead level in children from >10 mcg/dl to >5 mcg/dl. Preliminary data shows the rate of cases at the new threshold reported cases at this new threshold, as seen in **Table 2.15**. The rate has almost doubled in Chautauqua County and more than tripled state-wide.

Table 2.5 Rate of Children per 1,000 with Confirmed Elevated Blood-Lead Levels (>5 mcg/dl)

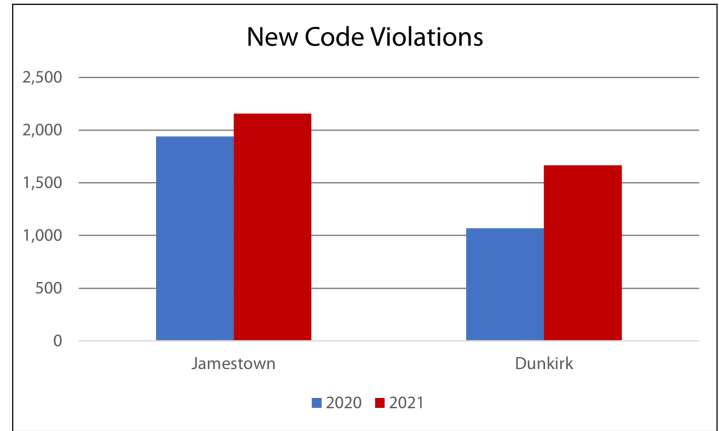
	Chautauqua County	NY State
2019	40.3	12.1

Radon is a cancer causing gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It occurs naturally in the earth, but can become a problem when it builds up indoors. Radon seeps into homes through cracks in the foundation. It easily passes through gravelly soil that is common in Chautauqua County due to its history of glacial activity. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon test results or educational information are required to be provided at the time of home sales. According to a study conducted by the New York State Department of Health from 1986 to 2007, the

percentage of basements with dangerous levels of radon (greater than 4pCi/L) in Chautauqua County is 35%. As radon levels do not change significantly with time, these levels are still considered accurate.

Another indicator of environmental hazards is the number of code violations that are recorded. According to information provided by code enforcement officers, the City of Jamestown had 1,941 new code violations in 2020 and 2,157 in 2021. The City of Dunkirk reported 1,070 new code violations in 2020 and 1,667 in 2021. Code violations are an indicator of the prevalence of substandard housing. Common code violations such as peeling paint and improper storage of trash pose environmental health hazards to the people living in substandard housing.

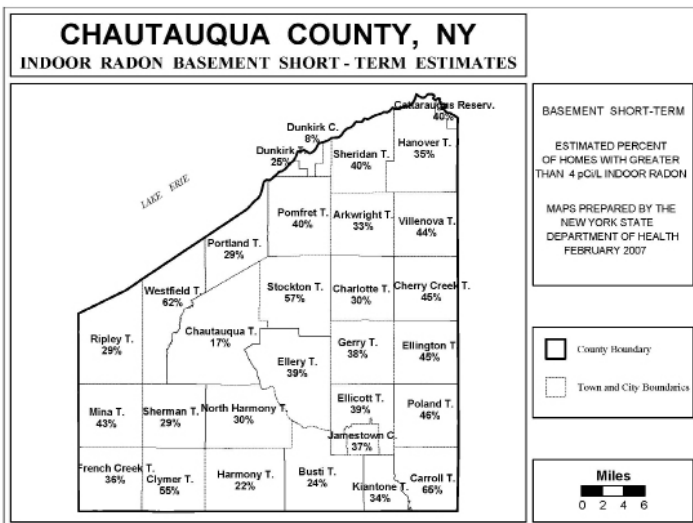
Chart 2.2 New Code Violations



COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

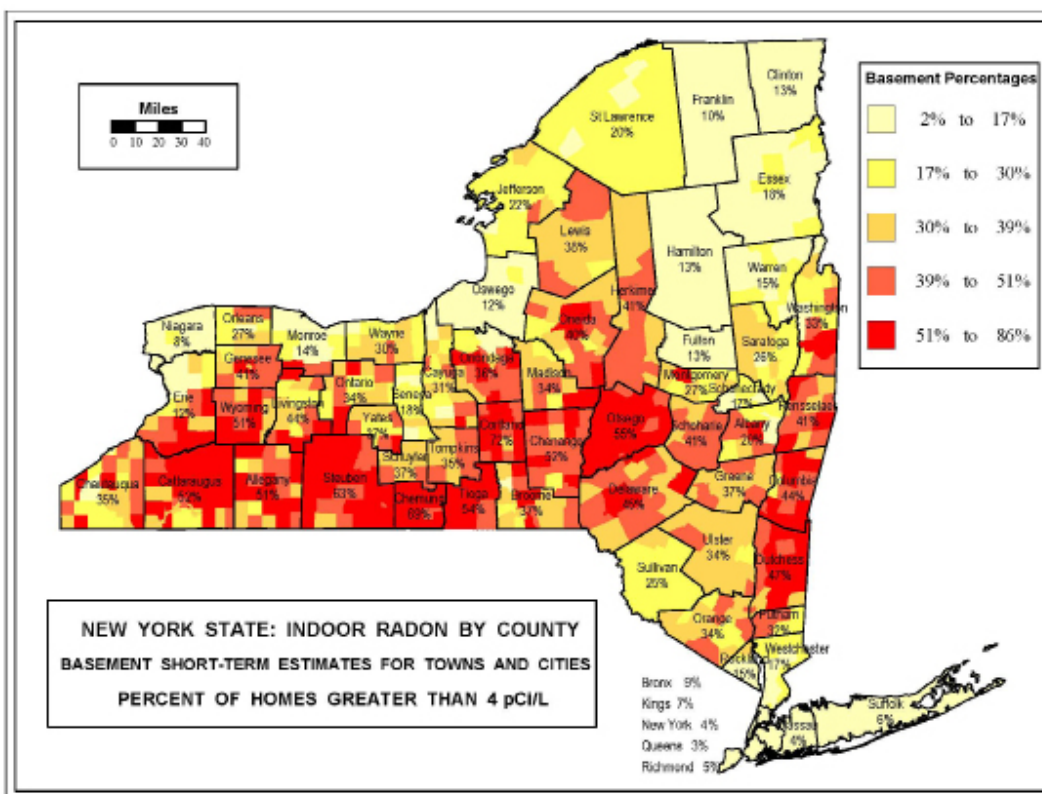
In 2022, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) conducted a community survey that addressed issues surrounding health, childcare, employment, and housing. When the respondents were asked about their housing situation, about 69.8% responded that they were homeowners, 28.5% were renters, and 1.7% were homeless or staying with someone else. These percent ages are consistent with the overall rates for Chautauqua County reported by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In August 2022, COI held a Community Council to discuss community needs (see Appendix III). When asked about concerns about the rental market and housing conditions, community members said there is an increase in out-of-town landlords, rents are increasing and making housing unaffordable, it is more difficult to find available housing, landlords aren't maintaining the condition of their rental housing, and there is a need for transitional housing for people coming out of prison. When asked about lead-based paint, community members expressed



Source: New York State Department of Health Radon Monitoring Program, 1986-2007

Chart 2.2 Indoor Radon Estimates by County



Source: New York State Department of Health Radon Monitoring Program, 1986-2007

concern about the age of the local housing stock and widespread presence of lead-based paint. The community is aware of children who have been lead-poisoned and that there is no safe blood-lead level. When asked what the biggest barriers to homeownership were, community members said that credit score, high prices, lack of available homes to buy, difficulty saving for down-payment and closing costs when rents are high, and the length of time for closing on the property were barriers.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Median home values have risen over the past three years benefiting current homeowners.
- There is increased community awareness on the dangers of lead-based paint.
- Homeownership rates remain strong and home buying is relatively affordable in Chautauqua County. In Chautauqua County more households have access to becoming first-time home buyers than in many other parts of the country.
- First-time home buyer programs that offer down

payment and closing costs assistance are available, and can assist low to moderate income households overcome barriers to homeownership. The affordability of homeownership is an opportunity for low-to moderate income households to build assets. This opportunity may be of particular benefit to minority households, who have lower rates of homeownership than white households both nationally and locally.

- Multiple local homeless services providers have received funding to develop new emergency shelters.
- Increased state and federal investments in residential energy efficiency have increased, which includes making new energy efficient appliances and mechanical systems available to consumers.

CHALLENGES

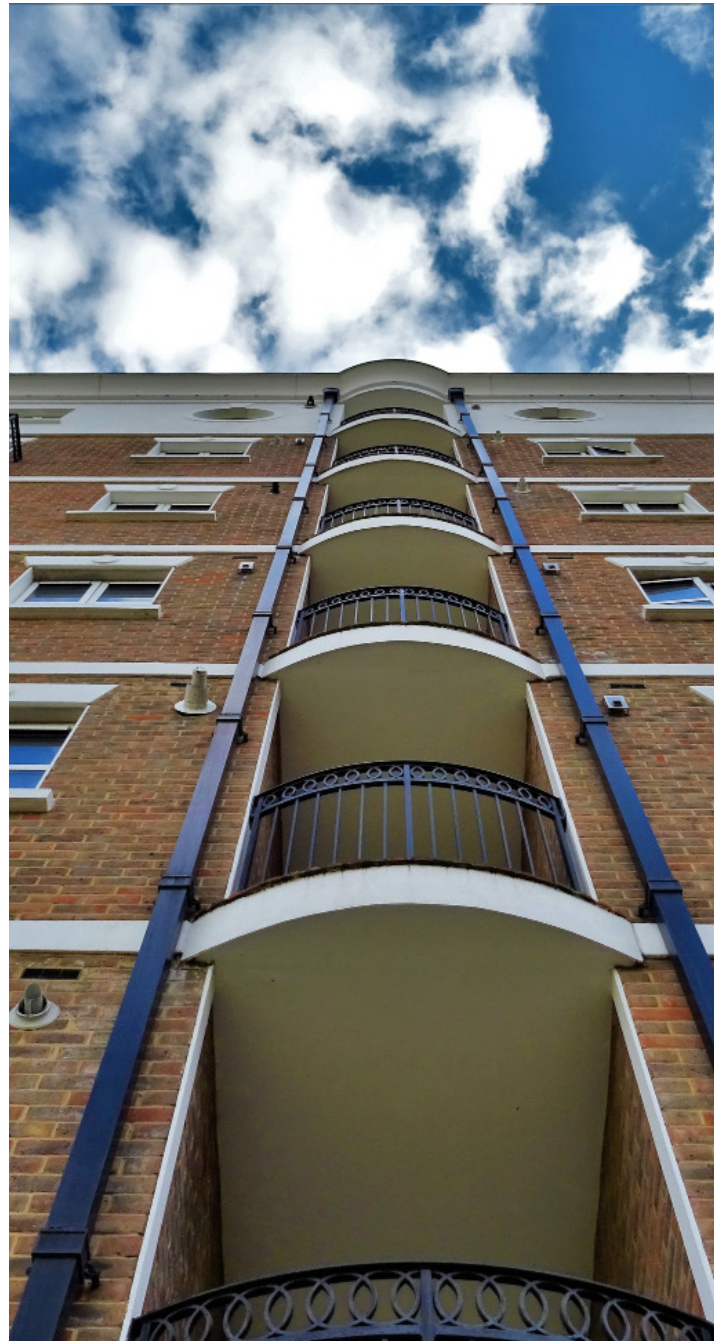
- One of the most significant local challenges is the number of rent-burdened households. Any successful anti-poverty strategy will need to address both the lack of adequate incomes and

the high cost of housing expenses. If unaddressed, unaffordable housing can lead to homelessness.

- A number of health hazards such as lead-based paint, asthma triggers, and poor indoor air quality can lead to poor health among low-income households.
 - Older housing has higher energy bills and can benefit from energy efficiency upgrades to improve comfort and reduce costs.
 - There is a lack of emergency shelter options for the homeless and an increase in street homelessness. Many of the homeless are being housed temporarily in area motels, which are located far from social service agencies, lack services, and are not an ideal environment for transitioning out of homelessness.
 - Interest rates have risen in 2022, making homeownership less affordable to first-time home buyers.
 - Rental housing is less available since the beginning of the pandemic and rents have increased. This has made rental housing less affordable and more difficult to obtain.
- Conduct outreach on fair housing laws and increase awareness of asset-building opportunities for communities of color and disabled persons.
 - Increase consumer financial education and knowledge of housing costs to prevent foreclosure or eviction.
 - Promote the development of new affordable housing units to increase the amount of available affordable housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote programs and affordable mortgage products to first-time homebuyers who are less likely to access homeownership.
- Continue to raise awareness on environmental health hazards in the county's old housing stock and offer lead remediation services to at-risk households.
- Develop emergency homeless shelters that meet the needs of women and families.
- Encourage grassroots initiatives to establish neighborhood standards and support improvements to the housing stock.
- Offer subsidized energy efficiency services to assist low-income households, who often live in the oldest and least energy efficient housing.



3. Health

INTRODUCTION

Health care has been a defining issue for Chautauqua County over the last several years. A report completed in 2022 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation rates Chautauqua County as 55th out of 62 counties in New York regarding health outcomes. Chautauqua County was rated 51 out of 62 for length of life, and 57 out of 62 for quality of life (which looks at persons reporting poor or fair health, the average number of days people reported to be physically and mentally unhealthy, and the percentage of births with low birth weight). The county rates 48th out of 62 for health factors including 57 out of 62 for health behaviors (which looks at tobacco use, diet and exercise, alcohol and drug use, and sexual activity).

On a more positive note, the county rated 17 out of 62 for clinical care, meaning that the county was ranked high in quality of care and access to care. Improving the population's health at the individual, family and county-wide levels is essential in addressing its problems in a holistic manner.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

According to the NYS Department of Health, the top 5 causes of death in Chautauqua County in 2019 were heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, unintentional injury, and stroke. The top three have remained at the top of the list consistently since at least 2008. (Source: Vital Statistics Data, January 2022)

Heart or cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in not just Chautauqua County, but across the nation. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and stroke. The most common type, coronary heart disease, involves the buildup of plaque that causes arteries to narrow, which can cause a heart attack. Another type, congestive heart failure, refers to fluid buildup around the heart that causes it to pump inefficiently. As seen in **Table 3.1**, Chautauqua County suffers from heart disease mortality rates that exceed the rates for Western NY and NY State.

Tables 3.2 and **3.3** display age-adjusted data for occurrences of selected types of cancer and mortality rates in Chautauqua County in comparison to Western NY and NY State. Data is provided by the NY State

Table 3.1 Heart Disease Mortality Rates. Age-adjusted data provided by the NY State Department of Health per 100,000 population for the years 2017-2019.

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
Cardiovascular disease	381.1	337.6	278.3
Coronary heart disease	200.5	171.9	173.4
Congestive heart failure	35.5	32.8	15.1

Table 3.2 Cancer Incidence Rate

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
All cancer	732.9	713.3	587.7
Female breast	182.7	189.4	164.6
Ovarian	15.4	15.8	14.2
Prostate	235.6	190.8	158.7
Lung/bronchus	104.4	100.4	72.6
Colon/rectum	41.3	50.6	45.7

Table 3.3 Cancer Mortality Rate

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
All cancer	150.3	174.3	149.2
Female breast	15.3	21.2	19.2
Ovarian	6.8	7.5	7.1
Prostate	11.8	17.0	17.8
Lung/bronchus	40.4	51.2	36.9
Colon/rectum	15.5	13.8	13.1

Department of Health per 100,000 population for the years 2017 - 2019.

Cancer

The overall rate of cancer incidence seems to have significantly increased in Chautauqua County, most notably, the incidence of lung / bronchus cancer increased significantly from the 2014-2016 rate of 66.5 to the recent rate of 104.4, while incidence of prostate cancer increased from 166 to 235.6. The incidence and mortality rates for ovarian cancer have not changed significantly over previous levels, but these rates are also lower than those of Western NY and the state. The overall rate of cancer mortality has significantly worsened over the last several years. The rate of deaths from cancer in Chautauqua County was 150.3 per 100,000 population for 2013 – 2015, compared to the 2016-2019 rate of 232.2 cancer deaths per 100,000 population.

Asthma

NYS Department of Health data also reveal that Chautauqua County has a high rate of deaths from chronic lower respiratory disease (44.1 per 100,000 pop.) compared to the WNY region (43.7) and the state (28.9). The term chronic lower respiratory disease encompasses chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma. In 2017, individuals in Chautauqua County visited emergency rooms for asthma at a rate of 40.6 per 10,000 persons, higher than the neighboring rural counties of Cattaraugus (28.3), Orleans (37.7), Genesee (24.3), and Allegany (34.7), but lower than the statewide average rate of 68.6. In Chautauqua County, there were ten deaths due to asthma between the years 2017 and 2019.

Diabetes

Information provided in Healthy People 2020, which outlines the federal government's 10-year goals for health and disease prevention, indicates that diabetes is the 7th leading cause of death in the United States. Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease two to four times and is the leading cause of kidney failure, amputations of lower limbs, and adult blindness. Up to 25% of Americans with diabetes are undiagnosed, and many more are at risk for developing the disease. Ethnic minority populations are more frequently affected by Type II diabetes, representing 25% of all diabetic adults and more than half of diabetic children nationally.

NYS Department of Health data indicate that 10.1% of

adults in Chautauqua County have been diagnosed with diabetes, compared to 10.0% for Western NY and 9.5% for NY State. **Table 3.4** illustrates that hospitalization rates for diabetics are lower than regional and state averages, while mortality due to diabetes is higher than regional and state averages.

Table 3.4 Diabetes Mortality and Hospitalization Rates

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
Diabetes mortality rate	35.7	32.8	22.5
Diabetes hospitalization rate (diabetes diagnosis)	15.5	20.5	21.4
Diabetes hospitalization rate (any diagnosis)	194.1	251.8	262.7

COVID-19

According to the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services, as of October 12, 2022, there have been 27,997 cases of COVID-19 in Chautauqua County and 319 deaths in the county due to COVID-19.

The CDC recommends staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations to significantly lower the risk of getting sick, being hospitalized, and dying from COVID-19. As of October 12th, 2022, 60.8% of the county's population is fully vaccinated while only 55.3% of the county's population is fully vaccinated and boosted.

According to USA facts, New York State has 73,331 deaths since the pandemic began.

Drug Abuse

Chautauqua County is not much different from other communities across the United States when it comes to having an epidemic crisis with drugs and addictions. It is an unbiased predator that impacts not only the addict, but their family, friends, peers, and coworkers, ultimately putting a burden on the entire community. Although Chautauqua County is a smaller, rural area compared to nearby Niagara and Erie counties, the rates of opioid incidents are often higher than these urban areas and the average for the Western NY region.

The COVID-19 pandemic also caused an increase in drug use and overdoses not only in Chautauqua County but all over the United States. According to the CDC over

81,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in May 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period. Chautauqua County experienced a 54% increase in non-fatal overdoses from 2019-2020. During the same timeframe overdose fatalities rose 18%, from 33 in 2019 to 39 in 2020.

In 2021, Chautauqua County experienced a dramatic increase in the number of fatal overdoses. According to the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services Annual Report 2021, preliminary figures for the year indicate that there were a total of 56 confirmed or suspected fatal overdoses, including 39 confirmed fatal overdoses, 17 suspected overdoses and 2 natural deaths or other accidents involving drugs. This represents a 27% increase over 2020 (44), and a 56% increase over 2019 (36) figures including confirmed and suspected overdoses.

Much like other areas throughout the country and NY State, the opioid epidemic has taken its toll on the local area. Heroin use continues to be a problem, especially in Chautauqua County, which has been federally designated as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA Counties

by State Report, July 2022). The county's close proximity to the major cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, the Pennsylvania border, and its closeness to a major thruway and expressway, makes the area appealing to drug dealers. The 2021 NY State- County Opioid Quarterly Report indicates that 215 doses of Naloxone, which is commonly known as Narcan, were administered in 2021 by emergency medical services, law enforcement, and registered programs to reverse overdose and prevent death.

The NYS Opioid Data dashboard uses data regarding opioid overdose deaths, outpatient emergency room visits, and hospital discharges to determine a rate of opioid burden per 100,000 population. In 2019, Chautauqua County had the highest rate of opioid burden in Western NY at 513.7. Additional Opioid indicators are illustrated in **Table 3.5**.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Statewide, 3 out of 5 cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are contracted by teens and young adults. In Chautauqua County, rates of gonorrhea for

Table 3.5 Comparison of Opioid Indicators, Selected Western NY Counties

Opioid Indicator	Chautauqua		Erie		Niagara		Western NY	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Overdose deaths involving any opioid, crude rate per 100,000 pop.	23	18.0	143	15.5	37	17.6	243	16.0
Overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone, crude rate per 100,000 pop.	19	14.9	110	12.0	32	15.2	192	12.6
All emergency department visits (including outpatients and admitted patients) involving any opioid overdose, crude rate per 100,000 pop.	105	82.3	625	67.9	137	65.1	995	65.5
All emergency department visits (including outpatients and admitted patients) involving heroin overdose, crude rate per 100,000 pop.	72	56.5	355	38.6	64	30.4	558	36.7
Opioid burden (including outpatient ED visits and hospital discharges for non-fatal opioid overdose, abuse, dependence, and unspecified use; and opioid overdose deaths), crude rate per 100,000 pop.	655	513.7	2,107	229.0	623	296.2	3,852	253.6
ED visits (outpatients) and hospital discharges involving opioid abuse, dependence and unspecified use, crude rate per 100,000 pop.	525	411.7	1,341	145.8	446	212.1	2,608	171.7

Source: 2019 Data, NYS Opioid Data Dashboard, Department of Health

ages 15-19 are lower than regional and statewide rates. However, rates for Chlamydia in males aged 15-19 and females aged 20-24 are alarmingly high and above state averages. Rates are illustrated in **Table 3.6**. Statewide, 3 out of 5 cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are contracted by teens and young adults. In Chautauqua County, rates of gonorrhea for ages 15-19 are lower than regional and statewide rates. However, rates for Chlamydia in males aged 15-19 and females aged 20-24 are alarmingly high and above state averages.

Data show that despite a decrease in newly diagnosed HIV cases in New York State, cases have slightly increased in Chautauqua County and Western NY as shown in **Table 3.7**. Despite the increase in these numbers there have been no deaths in Chautauqua County related to HIV and AIDS since 2014.

Maternity Care

Information provided by the NYS Department of Health in **Table 3.8** indicates that a lower percentage of pregnant women in Chautauqua County receive prenatal care in the first trimester as compared to Western NY and NY State. Despite this, county rates of premature birth and low birthweight are not significantly higher than regional or statewide rates.

NYS Department of Health data also reveal that Chautauqua County has a high rate of newborns affected by narcotics compared to the statewide level. The county rate of newborns with withdrawal syndrome and/or

Table 3.6 Sexually Transmitted Diseases

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
Gonorrhea, age 15-19	261.1	552.5	401.5
Chlamydia, males age 15-19	1204.4	1161.9	1142.6
Chlamydia, males age 20-24	1694.7	1944.2	2107.1
Chlamydia, females age 15-19	3035.3	3659.2	3535.7
Chlamydia, females age 20-24	3926.5	4151.8	3912.5

Table 3.7 New Cases of HIV

	2017	2018	2019
Chautauqua County	11	3	5
Western NY	106	60	75
NYS	2839	2497	2377

affected by narcotics via placenta or breast milk is 38.1 per 1,000 hospital deliveries as of 2019, compared to 9.0 per 1,000 for NY State. The data indicate a critical need for services and education to pregnant women, particularly those who abuse narcotics.

The rates of adolescent pregnancies and births in Chautauqua County are illustrated in **Table 3.9** per 1,000 females ages 15-19, which exceed the rates for Western NY and NY State as a whole. **Table 3.10** lists the cities and towns within Chautauqua County that have the highest rates of teen pregnancy by zip code according to data from the NYS Department of Health.

NYS Department of Health Vital Statistics data provides an abortion ratio that is calculated by the number of induced abortions per 1,000 live births in each county (for mothers of all ages). In Chautauqua County, induced abortions occur at a rate of approximately one for every ten live births. Abortion data for all Western NY counties is provided in **Table 3.11**.

Table 3.8 Prenatal Care and Birthweight

	Chautauqua County	Western NY	NY State
Births with early (1st trimester) prenatal care	6.9	77.2	76.3
Births with late (3rd trimester) or no prenatal care	6.8	5.0	5.4
Low birthweight births (< 2.5 kg)	8.0	8.5	8.1
Very low birthweight births (<1.5 kg)	1.4	1.5	1.4
Premature births (< 37 weeks gestation)	9.5	9.7	9.0

Table 3.9 Teen Pregnancies and Births, per 1,000

	Chautauqua County	Upstate NY	NY State
Teen Pregnancy Rate	28.3	20.5	26.7
Teen Birth Rate	21.9	15.5	11.9

NYS Department of Health data for 2017-2019

Table 3.10 Teen Pregnancy Rate by City/Town, per 1,000

	Teen Pregnancy Rate	Teen Birth Rate
Ripley	50.9	46.3
Jamestown	47.7	43.4
Dunkirk	43.9	37.7
Stockton	35.1	26.3
Cassadaga	28.6	19.0
Ashville	28.1	17.5
Brocton	26.0	26.0
Gerry	26.3	17.5

On June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court released its decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturning the constitutional right to abortion.

Abortion has been legal under New York State law since 1970 – three years before the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion throughout the country. Because the right is codified in New York State law, federal decisions to limit access to abortion will not impact New York State.

Table 3.11 Abortions by County, Western NY

	2017	2018	2019	Avg Births	Ratio
Western NY	4,198	4,289	4,144	15,833	265.9
Erie Co.	3,209	3,443	3,268	9,774	338.3
Niagara Co.	571	498	487	2,097	247.4
Allegany Co.	61	52	66	478	124.7
Chautauqua	155	117	128	1,332	100.1
Cattaraugus	86	72	89	836	98.4
Orleans	30	40	33	394	87.1
Genesee	54	45	40	561	82.6
Wyoming	32	22	33	361	80.3

Source: NYS Department of Health Vital Statistics

Health Care

According to a 2022 report released by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Chautauqua County is ranked 55th out of 62 counties in the state in the category of health outcomes and 48th out of 62 in health factors. On a more positive note, the county is ranked 17th out of 62 counties in New York with respect to clinical care. Some factors that contributed to the clinical care ranking include mammography screening rates and the percent of county residents who are without health insurance. Other findings include: 22% of adults in the county smoke cigarettes (compared to 13% statewide) and 34% of adults are obese (compared to 27% statewide). According to the Census Bureau, 4.9% of the population in Chautauqua County reported as uninsured, as compared to 7.7% five years ago.

Despite positive trends with respect to clinical care, Chautauqua County has relatively few primary care, dental, and mental health providers as compared with the rest of New York state and the United States overall. With respect to mental health providers, the county has fewer than half than that of top performing areas of the United States. Chautauqua County has been designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. The designation applies to primary health care, as well as mental health care and dentistry.

Access to Health Care

Until 2019, Chautauqua County had four hospitals: Brooks Memorial Hospital in Dunkirk, Lakeshore Hospital in Irving, UPMC Chautauqua in Jamestown, and Westfield Memorial Hospital in Westfield. However, in December 2019 Lake Shore Hospital announced its closing following several years of financial difficulties. Each of these hospitals has become affiliated with larger networks in recent years which may have the benefit of avoiding issues that tend to plague smaller hospitals in rural areas, such as understaffing, tight budgets, aging infrastructure, and an inability to provide high-quality or specialized care.

Chautauqua County is home to the Chautauqua Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center providing access to primary care, dental, and behavioral health services. They have centers located in both Jamestown and Dunkirk that offer access to care for county residents who are economically disadvantaged.

WellNow Urgent Care centers operate in Jamestown,

Lakewood, and Dunkirk and offer quick access to treatment for non-life-threatening injuries and illnesses. In 2017 Brooks Memorial Hospital announced its intention to move from the City of Dunkirk to the nearby Village of Fredonia but as of 2022 the plans are still being developed.

Individuals with disabilities and others needing transportation to medical appointments may access providers that have accessible vehicles, such as CARTS. A list of medical transportation providers can be found in the Transportation chapter of this document, which includes fee-based providers and options that are available only to special populations. A coordinated system of affordable medical transportation is a critical need in the county due to its high percentages of elderly, low income and disabled individuals in combination with its designation as a Health Professional Shortage Area.



Disability and Elder Care

Care and support for the disabled and the aged are critical needs in Chautauqua County. According to the Census Bureau’s 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 16.4% of the county’s non-institutionalized population has some type of disability, compared to 12.0% for NY State. Also, 20.1% of the county’s population is age 65 or over, compared to 16.5% of the population statewide. Among the over-65 population in Chautauqua County who are not residing in an institution, 67.5% have a disability.

There are a number of options available in Chautauqua

County to assist caregivers of people with disabilities or the elderly. The Resource Center provides care and support for individuals with disabilities of all types and levels. Chautauqua Adult Day Care operates two centers in the county (one in Jamestown and one in Dunkirk) which offer caregivers respite during the daytime hours and provide adults who attend with social and recreational opportunities. One of the Jamestown locations specifically focuses on serving individuals with Alzheimer’s and memory loss. Other resources are available through COI’s Home Care program, NY Connects, the Alzheimer’s Association of Western New York, the Chautauqua County Office for the Aging, the National Alliance for Family Caregivers, and the NYS Office for Persons with Disabilities. Resources include support groups for caregivers and respite care.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a concern nationwide and in Chautauqua County. Types of elder abuse include physical, financial, emotional, and psychological abuse and neglect. The most frequent perpetrators of elder abuse are partners/spouses, adult children, family members, and care workers. In a study published on the National Library of Medicine entitled *Prevalence and Correlates of Emotional, Physical, Sexual, and Financial Abuse and Potential Neglect in the United States: The National Elder Mistreatment Study*, it is estimated that 1 in 10 elderly adults have experienced abuse or neglect.

In Chautauqua County, intake referrals for Adult Protective Services have increased from 370 cases in 2020 to 425 cases in 2021. Data from the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services 2021 Annual Report is shown in **Table 3.11**. Reported cases of abuse have decreased somewhat. Self-isolation orders due to COVID-19 could be a factor in these numbers, as social isolation is a known risk factor for elder abuse.

Table 3.11 Adult Protective Service Cases in Chautauqua County

	2019	2020	2021
Intake referrals received	387	370	425
Case Types			
Abuse	160	110	111
Self-Neglect	213	180	223
Significant Case Factors			
Mental Health	272	166	152
Financial Exploitation	70	72	59

Source: Chautauqua County DHHS 2021 Annual Report



Mental/Behavioral Health

Data illustrate that there is a significant need for mental health resources in Chautauqua County. According to the 2020 NYS Expanded Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System, 12.6 % of adults surveyed statewide reported experiencing poor mental health for 14 or more days in the month prior to the survey. Among individuals responding to COI's Community Needs survey (Appendix I), 12.78% said that they or a member of their household needed, but could not get, mental health services within the last year. The survey also found that 67% of respondents reported new or worsened general anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused 61.9% of respondents to have a new or increased sense of isolation and 22.6% of respondents reported new or existing problems with accessing mental health care.

Based on information gathered from the Chautauqua County Community Health Assessment 2019-2021, mental health suicide and self-inflicted injury indicators show that suicide death rates are higher in Chautauqua County (14.1 per 100,000) than in Western New York (12.1 per 100,000) and New York State (8.0 per 100,000). Emergency Department (ED) and hospitalization rates for both adolescents and the general population are noticeably lower in Chautauqua County than the regional comparisons. This could be due to the lack of availability in ED hospital beds available within Chautauqua County since the closure of Lakeshore Hospital in 2019. The hospital had a 20-bed inpatient mental health unit and a 20-bed inpatient chemical dependency unit, a significant loss for Chautauqua County residents.

Chautauqua County has proportionately fewer mental health providers than regional and state comparisons.

In 2018, Chautauqua County had 149 mental health providers for every 100,000 residents, compared to 219 providers per 100,000 in Western New York, and 268 per 100,000 in New York State (Chautauqua County Community Health Assessment 2019-2021). A 24/7 Crisis Line is available in the county to assist anyone having or suspected of having a mental health or emotional crisis. The calls are triaged and managed by state managed Crisis Services in Buffalo. Situations that are not able to be de-escalated are referred to local providers that include the Chautauqua County Mobile Crisis Day Team, COI's Mobile Crisis Outreach Program (MCOP), or local law enforcement depending on the crisis. MCOP is available evenings, weekends, and holidays to provide a local response to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis during non-business hours.

Chautauqua County Sheriff James Quattrone was awarded a technical assistance grant in 2021 to develop a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program. CIT programs are community collaborations and partnerships between law enforcement, the mental health system, and consumer and advocacy groups. Specialized police training is an integral part of developing a CIT, and ongoing community collaboration is key to the success of the program. Among the goals of CIT are to reduce the number of arrests of individuals with mental illness, refer them to treatment facilities or other support services, and eliminate adverse incidents between law enforcement and those with mental illness. Part of the process in developing a CIT program involved closely examining how the current service system responds to individuals with mental illness experiencing a crisis. Key stakeholders came together to create a system "map" that details how the criminal justice and behavioral health systems identify and handle individuals experiencing mental health-related crises. From this effort, a monthly collaborative meeting was born in which providers and law enforcement meet to better coordinate systems of care. In addition, the mobile crisis teams are now using teleconferencing when appropriate for quick response to certain crisis situations.

TRENDS

The Chautauqua County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan for state that Chautauqua County, like most of the state and the nation, continues to have high rates of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. Chronic diseases can also be preventable and have been linked to unhealthy risk factors such as

unhealthy eating, lack of exercise, and the use of tobacco products.

The Chautauqua County Department of Health and several local law enforcement agencies have been participating in the Nationwide ODMAP project (<http://www.odmap.org/>), which provides local officials with real-time data regarding the nature and location of both fatal and non-fatal overdoses within a specific region. In Chautauqua County, the Department of Health has partnered with the Mental Health Association to offer support to individuals who experienced a non-fatal overdose. The reporting police department will notify the Department of Health of non-fatal overdoses in their jurisdiction, who will in turn notify the Mental Health Association. A Peer Advocate is assigned to make contact with the individual to offer resources and assistance in linking with treatment options.

Trends that have been identified over the last several years in Chautauqua County include barriers to health care such as lack of access to providers and medications, transportation for individuals in rural communities to get to appointments, and education on mental illness to combat the stigma that prevents individuals from seeking help.

According to the NYS Department of Health and NYS Health Profile, with the closing of Lakeshore Hospital, Chautauqua County has 3 hospitals with a total of 366 beds that are designated for a variety of services (surgical, intensive care, maternity, etc.). Chautauqua County also has 924 beds in Nursing and Rehab facilities and 766 beds in Assisted or Enriched living facilities.

Health care organizations in the Western NY region have difficulties recruiting and retaining staff. According to the 2022 report *The Health Care Workforce in New York: Trends in the Supply and Demand for Health Care Workers* published by the SUNY at Albany School of Public Health, the COVID-19 Pandemic has had an impact in both recruitment and retention. The report indicates that LPNs and RNs were the hardest to recruit as of 2020. A shortage of workers, fear of exposure to COVID-19, and enhanced unemployment benefits were the most common reasons given for these difficulties. 100% of Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities surveyed reported difficulties in recruitment for Home Health Aides, RNs, and Personal Care Aides for the same reasons. This report also cites retention difficulties as a problem for the reasons of fear of exposure to COVID-19, workers finding higher paying jobs elsewhere, and childcare or family demands at home.

In 2022 NY State increased the minimum wage for Home Care Workers to \$15.20/hour (for regions outside

of the NYC Metro area and surrounding counties). By early 2023 the minimum wage for Home Care workers increases to \$15.90/hour. While this is good news for workers, reimbursement rates for providers have not kept pace with the increase and may cause instability among the agencies providing the services.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the health care problems in the county. A survey completed in 2021 by COI as part of its COVID-19 Assessment showed that over 73% of respondents experienced a new or worsening fear of getting sick; 67% of respondents reported new or worsened anxiety; 61.9% reported a new or increased sense of isolation; 53.4% have had difficulty maintaining a healthy weight during the pandemic, and 30.5% said that this was a new problem for them; 30.2% of those surveyed reported problems with accessing health care; 22.6% reported new or existing problems with accessing mental health care. This data suggests an increased need for health education, mental health resources and funding to meet Chautauqua County's healthcare needs.

COI's 2022 Community Survey (Appendix I) elicited response from county residents with respect to health care and other factors. Of those responding to the survey:

- 22.18% reported being very concerned or extremely concerned about the physical health of themselves or someone in their household.
- 29.32% reported being very concerned or extremely concerned about the affordability of health insurance. 33.08% reported being somewhat concerned.
- 22.56% reported being very concerned or extremely concerned about the ability to afford medical or mental health care. 33.08% reported being somewhat concerned.
- 15% missed a medical appointment because of lack of transportation.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- The availability of Narcan has decreased the number of deaths due to Opioids.
- A community wide collaborative initiative began in January 2022 between law enforcement and behavioral health providers to better coordinate systems of care.
- Deaths from cancer have decreased in the county over the last several years.
- Chautauqua County residents have access to training on the administration of Narcan, an opiate antagonist used to reverse the effects of an opiate overdose, through the Chautauqua County Department of Health, the Mental Health Association, and Evergreen Health. Training can also be done online through the Chautauqua County Mental Health Association.

CHALLENGES

- The limited public transportation system in the county and the county's designation as a Health Professional Shortage Area make it difficult for some residents to access care.
- High percentages of elderly and disabled Chautauqua County residents create a strong need for agencies that provide services to assist these populations.
- Worker shortages and non-competitive salaries create challenges for hospitals, nursing homes and home health care agencies to recruit and retain staff.
- High costs for health, mental health, and dental care can still be unaffordable for those with insurance that have high deductibles, co-insurances, and co-pays.
- Lack of mental health beds and staff for mental health emergencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue funding and training for Narcan administration to reduce overdose deaths.
- Continue / increase funding for senior health services, including Home Care, due to the aging population.
- Expand transportation options for individuals to access medical care.
- Continue funding for programs to address the needs of low income, elderly, and disabled populations.
- Increase substance abuse education and services to adolescents, including those who are pregnant.
- Increase funding for mental health supports.
- Increase the eligibility threshold for Medicaid qualifications.
- Increase preventative health measures such as public gardens, physical recreation locations and education.



4. Child Care

INTRODUCTION

Early Education and childcare programs are a vital service needed to promote the growth and development of children throughout our country. In New York State these programs serve more than 300,000 children each year. Regulated home-based and center-based childcare should be affordable, accessible, and most importantly, of high quality. Oversight and monitoring of regulated and licensed child care is the responsibility of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Definitions for Modalities of Child Care

Day Care Centers - care that takes place in a non-residential building for six or more children. There are also small Day Care Centers, however there are currently none of the small centers in Chautauqua County. (OCFS licensed childcare)

Group Family Day Care - care that takes place in a personal residence for up to twelve full-time children aged 0-5 years, and up to four school aged children when school is not in session. There is an infant (0-2 years) limit of two per adult. (OCFS licensed childcare)

Family Day Care - care that takes place in a personal residence for up to six full-time children aged 0-5 years and up to two school-aged children when school is not in session. There is an infant (0-2 years) limit of two per adult. (OCFS registered childcare)

School Age Child Care - provide care for more than six children in kindergarten through age twelve. This type of care takes place outside of school hours and during vacations and holidays. (OCFS registered childcare)

Legally Exempt Informal - childcare in which a friend or family member gets paid to provide care for someone's child, be it a relative or friend. A parent eligible for childcare assistance chooses whom they want to watch their child and that provider then enrolls as a legally exempt provider. There are limits on the number of children in care allowed depending on the provider's relationship to children in care and location of care. (OCFS regulated childcare)

Legally Exempt Group - care that takes place in a non-residential facility and does not require licensing or

registration. (OCFS regulated childcare)

The quality of childcare directly impacts a child's ability to learn and build healthy relationships. Unlimited learning opportunities and a safe and nurturing environment all greatly contribute to a child's growth and development.

There has been about a 9% drop in the childcare slot availability in licensed and registered care from 2018 to 2022, with a 9.16% drop in Chautauqua County specifically. Older childcare providers have retired, many making that decision as a result of the pandemic of 2020-2021. Younger providers are finding that the pay is not competitive or affordable enough for them to stay. At the same time, funds have been made available for childcare as a result of the pandemic, and in New York State, the governor's initiative on childcare as part of her overall economic development plan. Grant opportunities are intended to encourage prospective providers to open new programs and to help existing providers pay staff and enhance their programs. The result was not as productive as was hoped for, but the funding did encourage some new program start-ups and expansion of some existing ones. Short timelines and difficult to meet requirements hampered the effort.

The Child Care Assistance Program Income Guidelines have been increased from 200% (Chautauqua County) of poverty to 300% of poverty to include more working families in covering childcare costs. Market rates, the maximum amount of childcare cost covered by the assistance program, were increased significantly, by 25%-30% in 2022.

The Child Care Council, along with Child Care Resource & Referral agencies across the state, assist providers in taking advantage of grant and other funding opportunities, while advocating for parents and childcare providers, partnering in the community to raise awareness about childcare assistance, and shedding light on issues that trouble the childcare industry.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

Affordability and Cost of Care

It has been well documented that childcare is expensive and cuts into a family's budget deeply,

surpassing college tuition costs in some cases - as seen in **Chart 4.1**. According to 2020 ACS census data the median annual household income in Chautauqua County is \$48,315. In New York State the median annual household income is \$71,117.

Based on the newly updated Market Survey from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the average annual cost for infant care in New York State is \$17,170. The average annual cost for four-year-old care is \$15,319.

Child Care Assistance

To alleviate family childcare costs, a child care assistance program was developed and funded beginning in 1990 with the Child Care Development

Chart 4.1 Annual Costs for Families in 2022

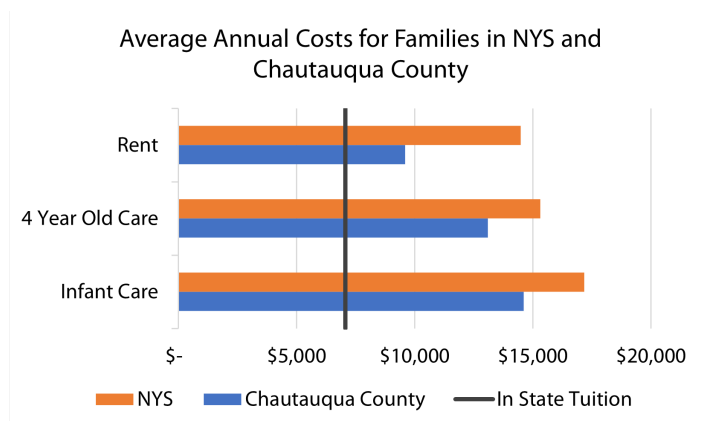


Table 4.1 Average Day Care Cost in NYS

Average Day Care Center Cost in New York State		
	Weekly	Daily
Under 1 ½ years		
2022	\$295	\$64
2021	\$220	\$48
Under 1 1/2 - 2 years		
2022	\$275	\$59
2021	\$206	\$45
3-5 years		
2022	\$253	\$55
2021	\$195	\$44
6 - 12 years		
2022	\$245	\$55
2021	\$180	\$39

Source: OCFS NYS Child Care Market Rate Survey Report, 2022

Table 4.2 Average Family/Group Family Cost in NYS

Average Family/Group Family Cost in New York State		
	Weekly	Daily
Under 2 years		
2022	\$266	\$55
2021	\$160	\$35
2 years		
2022	\$252	\$53
2021	\$150	\$35
3-5 years		
2022	\$250	\$50
2021	\$150	\$33
6 - 12 years		
2022	\$225	\$50
2021	\$150	\$30

Source: OCFS NYS Child Care Market Rate Survey Report, 2022

Table 4.3 Average Legally Exempt Standard Cost in NYS

Average Legally Exempt Standard Cost in New York State		
	Weekly	Daily
Under 2 years		
2022	\$173	\$36
2021	\$104	\$23
2 years		
2022	\$164	\$34
2021	\$98	\$23
3-5 years		
2022	\$163	\$33
2021	\$98	\$21
6 - 12 years		
2022	\$146	\$33
2021	\$98	\$20

Source: OCFS NYS Child Care Market Rate Survey Report, 2022

Block Grant (CCDBG). This funding covers the majority of the cost and families cover a smaller “family share”.

As of August 2022, eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program, or subsidy, has been increased to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (see **Table 4.4**). The family share cost changed from a sliding scale to a rate of 1% for all families beginning in August of 2022. Families qualify based on income, reasons for needing day care,

and a child's age or individual needs. Families are free to choose a provider that meets their needs as long as the provider is licensed or registered. They can also choose a family member or friend who will then enroll as an informal (legally exempt) provider.

Table 4.4 OCFS CCAP Income Eligibility Requirements

Family Size	Maximum Family Income Prior to 8/2022	Current Maximum Family Income as of 8/2022
2	\$36,620	\$54,930
3	\$46,060	\$69,090
4	\$55,500	\$83,250
5	\$64,940	\$97,410
6	\$74,380	\$111,570
7	\$83,820	\$125,730
8	\$93,260	\$139,890

Table 4.5 Percent of Child Care Assistance Subsidy Money Spent, 2022

County	% Of Money Spent
Cattaraugus	50%
Chautauqua	40%
Erie	66%
Niagara	35%

While childcare assistance is available, it does not reach all eligible families. As of 11/1/22, Chautauqua County spent only 40% of the money allocated for childcare assistance. There may be several reasons for this, such as the lack of public knowledge about the funding. However, anecdotal information from parents and providers reveals that the process is too difficult and cumbersome. The system requires an application along with several supporting documents to make the eligibility determination for each family.

Child Care Availability

According to a 2020 study that analyzed 25 states across the nation, 8.4 million children under the age of five needed childcare. However, only about 5.9 million childcare slots were available. Thus, roughly 2.7 million children, or 31.7%, could not access quality childcare due to a limited number of childcare slots. These numbers were used to identify childcare "deserts". A childcare desert is a geographic area where there are three or more

children under the age of five per available childcare slot in local day care centers, family day care, or group family day care programs. Chautauqua County is child care desert.

Table 4.6 Child Care Slots in the WNY Region

County	2018 Slots	2022 Slots	No. +/-	% +/-
Allegany Co.	1,539	1,330	-209	-13.585%
Cattaraugus Co.	1,687	1,874	+187	+11.08%
Chautauqua Co.	3,951	3,589	-362	-9.16%
Erie Co.	29,495	26,689	-2,806	-9.51%
Niagara Co.	4,933	4,724	-209	-4.24%
Total for WNY	41,957	38,206	-3,751	-8.94%

Table 4.6 illustrates OCFS data regarding the total number of childcare slots available in each county of the Western NY Region. Only one county (Cattaraugus) has shown an increase in the number of available slots over the last 4 years. Overall, the Western NY Region has seen a decline of almost 9% for the total number of available slots.

OCFS data in **Table 4.7** illustrates that there are 64 Licensed/Registered day care facilities in Chautauqua County, not including School Aged Child Care (SACC). This number has decreased from 70 facilities in 2018. Legally Exempt Care has decreased from 355 facilities to 232 facilities.

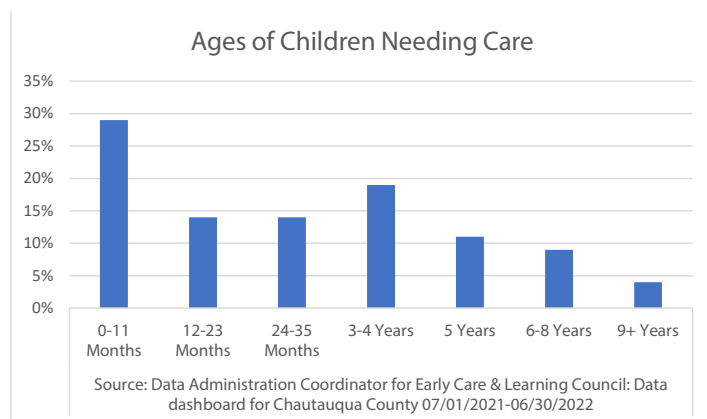
Many New Yorkers get on childcare waiting lists as soon as they know they are pregnant. Care for infants and toddlers is requested more frequently than any other age group, based on statewide Child Care Resource & Referral data. Of the existing 21,809 childcare slots in the Western NY region, less than half are devoted to infants and toddlers. In Chautauqua County between 7/1/2021-6/30/2022, the most requested childcare referrals were for infants 0-11 months. Regulatory limits on caregiver to infant ratios contribute to the challenge for these slots.

Openings for three and four-year olds were the next most sought-after slots in Chautauqua County during this time period. Families have more options available for three and four-year olds such as public Pre-K and other private preschools, but these may not have full day hours that are needed for parents to work. Also, with such limited slots available overall, families with multiple children may not be able to secure care for all children at the same daycare.

Table 4.7 Day Care Facilities and Available Slots for Chautauqua County

	2018 Facilities	2018 Slots	2022 Facilities	2022 Slots
Day Care Center (DCC)	21	1,608	22	1,656
Family Day Care (FDC)	32	254	27	214
Group Family Day Care (GFDC)	17	266	15	240
School Aged Child Care (SACC)	15	1,823	13	1,479
Legally Exempt Child Care	355	-	232	-
Total	440	3,951	309	3,589

Chart 4.2 Ages of Children Needing Care



Childcare is more likely to impact a mother's career than it is to impact a father's career. Mothers with young children are 40% more likely than fathers to report that childcare issues have negatively impacted their careers, according to a survey conducted by the Center for American Progress. About 20% of stay-at-home mothers would enter the workforce if they had childcare assistance. 20% of mothers who do not currently work would look for a job if they had better access to quality childcare. An additional 42% of working mothers would look for a higher-paying job, and 29% of working mothers would seek additional schooling or training to help them advance in their careers. Over the past two decades, women's participation in the labor force has been declining, and rising childcare costs are partly to blame. The United States' lack of federal childcare and paid family leave policies is tied to at least one-third of the

decline in female employment. The center also found that fewer mothers in the workforce are directly associated with childcare deserts.

Overall, 70% of American mothers participate in the labor force, and roughly 42% of them are the sole or primary breadwinners in their homes. This rate is even higher among Black mothers, with 71% of them serving as the sole or primary breadwinners for their household (Zippia. 30+ Essential US Child Care Statistics 2022).

Impacts of COVID-19

Over 65% of OCFS licensed childcare providers stayed open during the spring of 2020. In May 2020, OCFS interviewed 13,000 childcare providers in New York regarding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their program. Providers that remained open reported that they were serving an average of 30% of their licensed capacity, which is not enough to remain fiscally viable. In 2022, an average of 26 programs (mostly home-based) are closing per week in NY State, as opposed to a much smaller number of closures per week for the same time a year ago.

Universal Pre-K

In New York State, formal early education is offered in public Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. There are currently 563 programs in New York State. In 2021 in Chautauqua County 361 children were enrolled in a Pre-K half day program and 535 children were enrolled in a full day program. These enrollment numbers are down from 2020 which were 430 and 823 respectively. (NYS Department of Education)

Pre-K programs are not childcare programs per se. The formal early education of Pre-K programs may or may not be offered in daycare centers or home based licensed/registered programs. Early Head Start and Head Start centers do focus on kindergarten readiness but there are income guidelines for enrollment, with a limited number of openings for above income families. Many families find it difficult to enroll their children in Pre-K programs because the hours do not match their working hours and transportation to and availability of aftercare is often a roadblock.



TRENDS/DIRECTIONS

Support to Increase Child Care Supply and Stabilize the Child Care System

The childcare workforce is traditionally under-valued and under-paid, in particular center-based childcare workers. The inevitable result is a lack of childcare workers and businesses. Much of the childcare workforce lives in poverty, with “65% of childcare providers receiving such low wages that they are eligible for several social safety net programs such as food stamps or Medicaid.” (NYS Senate: *The Child Care Crisis In NYS 2021 Report*, Dec. 2021)

In an article published by the U.S. Department of the Treasury entitled *The Economics of Child Care Supply in the United States*, day-care workers reportedly earn so little they rank in the bottom 2 percent of all professions. Nationwide, women are affected most by these low wages. (*America’s Child-Care Equilibrium Has Shattered*, The Atlantic.) The failure to pay childcare workers as educators has contributed directly to the staffing shortage.

The childcare services industry is still down 126,700 workers— more than a 10 percent decline from pre-pandemic levels, Labor Department data shows. A survey of childcare providers last summer from the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that 80% of respondents reported staffing shortages – and the vast majority cited low wages as the reason

why. The national average wage for a childcare worker was \$12.24 an hour in May 2020, according to Child Care Aware.

Addressing New York State Child Care Deserts

New York State identified \$100M to address the childcare deserts by expanding licensed childcare capacity to those areas of the state with the least supply. \$70M was awarded to new registered/licensed providers and \$30M was awarded to existing registered/licensed programs. A Child Care Desert grant that was made available in 2022 to existing programs looking to expand their space to increase capacity.

Jamestown Community College (JCC) conducted an assessment of childcare needs among their students and staff in March 2022. Of the 162 responses from students and staff with children under the age of 12, a total of 77.8% indicated a need for childcare on or near the campus where they work or go to school. Children of those responding included 143 children under the age of 5 and 162 school-aged children. Survey results also indicated a need for childcare during the summer and on holidays. Because of this urgent need, JCC was awarded a NY State grant for the startup of childcare services on their Jamestown and Olean campuses. The centers will offer 100 childcare slots each and are expected to be operational by the Fall 2023 semester.

Stabilization Grants

In addition to the Desert Grants to encourage new or expanding programs, Stabilization Grants were created to help existing programs with operating and staffing costs. In 2021, OCFS awarded \$900M to 15,000 eligible childcare providers through the Child Care Stabilization Grant.

Based on the success of the Child Care Stabilization 1.0 grants, OCFS distribute another round of funds to childcare providers to strengthen their infrastructure and support their workforce. OCFS is prioritizing workforce support for childcare staff by requiring that at least 75% of the Child Care Stabilization Grant 2.0 for Workforce Supports be spent on workforce support expenses.

In conjunction with these grant opportunities, the Chautauqua Child Care Council offers many trainings to help strengthen the foundation in childcare and childcare providers in Chautauqua County. The six core business trainings currently being offered are meant to give new or seasoned childcare professionals the tools to run their childcare business successfully.

Legislative Efforts

In 2021 New York State legislators and stakeholders took part in a ten-week long statewide Child Care Listening Tour and conducted a survey to gather information from providers and parents about their perspectives on childcare.

The results of the survey show that almost 25% of parents could not find openings for their children, 16% could not find childcare to meet the hours of care they need, and 15% could not find programs in their areas. About 35% cited affordability as an issue. Many, 90% of those surveyed, said that they have received subsidies but 67% percent of those noted that they “have had problems becoming eligible or receiving the subsidy”. Delays in the subsidy process can cause slots for their children to become unavailable. A survey of providers revealed that issues with staffing and financial stability were the top issues for them. (*NYS Senate The Child Care Crisis In NYS 2021 Report, Dec. 2021*)

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Parents have expressed frustration with the process for obtaining child care subsidies. One parent shared this at an information gathering session of parents, providers, and other stakeholders in New York State, “...applied in January but didn’t get a determination for months, and then was forced to repeat the process all over again. She faced further paperwork because her hours of employment vary. After this additional paperwork was rejected because her employer didn’t sign it in the right spot, this parent gave up on the process after nearly a year in. (*The Child Care Crisis In New York State, New York State Senate Report, Dec. 2021*)

Most licensed/registered providers in Chautauqua County accept payment through the Child Care Assistance Program subsidies, but they too report to the Child Care Council the problems that parents have in navigating the system.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- A Child Care Availability Task Force was formed in 2018 and to explore innovative approaches to affordability and access to child care in NYS.
- OCFS plans to have an advertising push to increase the public’s awareness about childcare assistance and informal legally exempt care. The Chautauqua Children’s Coalition is partnering with the Child Care Council to raise public awareness about the child-care assistance program and informal care.
- A number of local coalitions exist that focus on collaboration among organizations to promote healthy child development and education, including the Chautauqua Education Coalition, the Chautauqua Connections Children’s Coalition, and the Chautauqua Leadership Institute.
- The Chautauqua Child Care Council is one of the leading community service organizations that works with parents, providers, businesses, and community organizations to help promote the availability of quality child care services in the area. It is one of the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies throughout New York State that are an invaluable link between families, home-based and center-based child care programs, and communities. CCR&Rs educate families about high-quality care and help them find it; recruit and train new providers; offer providers technical assistance; and advocate for the expansion of high-quality early care and learning services. The Chautauqua Child Care Council of Chautauqua also works to assess the local supply and demand of child care, and increase the supply where needed.
- Head Start (ages 3-5) and Early Head Start (pregnancy through age 2) programs provide comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and families. See the Head Start Addendum to this document for more information about these programs in Chautauqua County.
- The NYS Infant Toddler Resource Network, funded by the OCFS, is an initiative aimed at supporting high-quality infant and toddler care. The Western New York Infant Toddler Resource Network serves the counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming.
- Early Care and Learning Council (ECLC) is a statewide, not-for-profit membership organization that represents the 35 CCR&R programs across New York State. It works closely with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services to support and strengthen the capacity of CCR&Rs agencies.

CHALLENGES

- High costs of care, limited operating times, and lack of child care choices are barriers.
 - Availability of slots in Chautauqua County does not keep pace with demand. New providers have opened, but the net gain against providers who have closed has not been enough. New York State has over 1,000 fewer programs than at the start of the pandemic.
 - New and existing providers have had several grant opportunities, but these temporary supports do not address the underlying issues.
 - The approval process continues to be a deterrent to the full use of the Child Care Assistance Program (subsidy) funding. A number of factors may affect the parent's eligibility in a negative way within the current rigid eligibility system.
 - Older homes and non-residential buildings in the county require more costly repairs and enhancements to comply with fire safety requirements to start up programs.
 - While most parents and employers agree there are problems in the childcare system, they are not often vocal about solutions.
 - Child care businesses struggle to provide competitive pay for childcare staff and teachers without driving up the cost of childcare.
- cost of high quality child care.
 - Increase providers to help eliminate child care deserts.
 - Improve the childcare assistance process to increase the use of subsidies.
 - Continue the work of the Child Care Task Force.
 - Create a plan to recruit and prepare new staff in early care and education to enter the work force.
 - Increase wages for child care workers to affirm their importance and encourage more individuals to pursue an early care and education profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Permanent sustainable funding for childcare start-ups, whether grants or low-interest loans.
- Reach out to employers to involve them in solutions to childcare issues and make them aware of the challenges parents struggle with to complete the childcare assistance process so they can support them in securing childcare.
- Engage employers as a key partner in establishing an affordable and accessible high-quality child care system.
- Adopt subsidy market rate that reflects the real



5. Youth

INTRODUCTION

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework for helping youth to grow into healthy, productive adults (acf.hhs.gov/). There is a wealth of evidence that outlines the protective factors needed to prepare young people for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood, including:

- Physical and psychological safety and security
- Clear expectations for behavior and opportunities to make decisions
- Connections with peers that support healthy behaviors
- Connections with caring adults
- A sense of belonging and personal value
- Opportunities to develop positive social values and norms
- Skill building and mastery
- Opportunities to make a contribution to community and develop a sense of mattering
- Strong links between family, school, and community resources

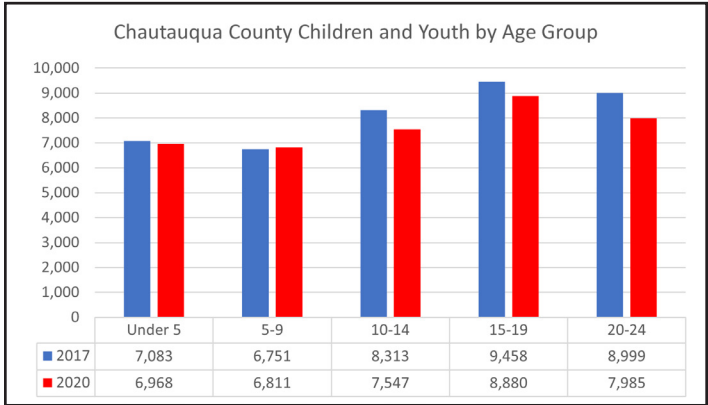
Most youth in Chautauqua County have access to at least some of these protective factors through their connections to family, school, and community. Quality programming exists through after school programs and youth providers to increase opportunities for youth to develop and reinforce skills and positive connections, although these opportunities could be increased to meet the demand.

Still, a significant portion of Chautauqua County's young people are challenged by the effects of living in poverty-stricken households. Some are forced to leave the family home for various reasons and become homeless just as they are struggling with the trials of adolescence. Others experience abuse or neglect. For these youth in crisis, programs and services that include intensive trauma-informed practices are critical.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

Chart 5.1 provides data regarding numbers of children and youth in Chautauqua County, as reported by the American Community Survey 5-Year estimates published by the US Census Bureau. Children and youth up to age 24 accounted for 31.1% of the county's total population in 2017, which decreased to 30.0% in 2020. The number of youth decreased in each age group over the three-year period, with the exception of a slight increase in the 5-9 age group.

Chart 5.1 Chautauqua County Children and Youth by Age Group, 2017 and 2020



The race and ethnicity of children under the age of 18 in Chautauqua County are illustrated in Table 5.1. The percentage of children and youth who are persons of color has increased somewhat over census data from 2017. Hispanic individuals account for 13.6% of the under-18 population in 2020, compared to 12.5% of this population in 2017. Likewise, the percentage of children and youth identifying as "two or more races" increased from 5.8% in 2017 to 7.1% in 2020.

In Chautauqua County, census data indicate that 61.7% of all children under 18 live in married couple households, 26.4% live in a household with a female head of household, and 11.1% live in households with a single male householder.

As illustrated in **Table 5.2**, census information from 2020 reveals that there are 2,050 grandparents that are living in the same household with their own grandchildren. In 494 of these situations (24.1% of

Table 5.1 Race and Ethnicity of Youth <18 in Chautauqua Co.

	2017	2020
One Race	94.2%	92.9%
White	89.0%	86.7%
Black/African American	2.5%	2.8%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	0.5%	0.25%
Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%
Some other race	2.0%	2.9%
Two or More Races	5.8%	7.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	12.5%	13.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	79.8%	78.5%

households that include grandparents and children), the parent is not present and the grandparent(s) are responsible for caring for the children. Although the total number of grandparents living in the same household as their grandchildren has decreased since the 2015 census figure (2,158), the number of households where there is no parent in the household and the grandparents are responsible for the children has increased over the last five years.

For the population overall in Chautauqua County, 17.8% lives in poverty (2020 U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates). However, many of the county’s residents who are in poverty are in families with children, as documented by the much higher poverty rate for

Table 5.2 Grandparents in same household as grandchildren, Chautauqua County

	2015	2020
# Grandparents living in same household with grandchildren	2,158	2,050
# Grandparents living in the same household and responsible for children (no parent present)	414	494
% of all multi-generational households where grandparent(s) is responsible for children	19.2%	24.1%

Table 5.3 Poverty characteristics of Children in Chautauqua County

Percent of Families Below Poverty			
	All Families	Married Couple Families	Single Female with Children
With children <age 18	21.8%	9.4%	45.1%
With children <age5	22.3%	14.2%	47.2%

families with children under age 18 (21.8%). The poverty rate for families varies by the type of household in which they live, as illustrated in **Table 5.3**. Children of single mothers are much more likely to live in poverty than children in two-parent families.

Education

The following data in **Table 5.4** from the Census Bureau illustrate the educational characteristics of youth ages 18 – 24 in the county compared to NY State and the nation. The county has a higher percentage of persons ages 18 – 24 who have not completed high school compared to the statewide average. Nearly half of the 18-24 year old population in the county has completed at least some college or an Associates degree, but county residents in this age group lag well behind the state and the nation for completion of a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Table 5.5 shows the educational attainment of the adult population over the age of 24, as reported by the Census Bureau. In this age group, Chautauqua County

Table 5.4 Educational Attainment for Ages 18 to 24 years

	Chautauqua County	NY State	United States
Less than high school graduate	12.6%	10.7%	12.2%
High School graduate (or equivalency)	31.6%	27.1%	32.1%
Some college or Associate’s degree	49.2%	44.5%	43.9%
Bachelor’s degree or higher	6.7%	17.6%	11.8%

Table 5.5 Educational Attainment for Ages 25+

	Chautauqua County	NY State	United States
Less than high school graduate	10.5%	12.8%	11.5%
High School graduate (or equivalency)	34.6%	25.5%	26.7%
Some college or Associate's degree	31.7%	24.4%	28.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	23.1%	37.4%	32.9%

shows higher percentages of high school completion, as well as college attendance or completion, over the age 18-24 population in the county. However, county percentages for completion of Bachelor degrees lag behind statewide and national averages.

The New York State Education Department publishes report cards for public schools and aggregates data at the county level. **Table 5.6** compares student demographic data from the 2020-2021 school year to data for the 2017-2018 school year as an average of all 18 Chautauqua County public school districts combined. The data reveal that rates of English Language Learners, and those who are economically disadvantaged have changed only slightly over the last few years, while the number of and homeless children reported by schools decreased by more than half. This decrease is likely due to a moratorium placed on housing evictions by NY State during the pandemic. Also, public schools in the county closed immediately in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and many schools developed their Fall 2020 reopening plans to include remote or hybrid learning models rather than in-person instruction.

Graduation rates from the NYS School Report Card illustrate the disparity in high school completion among disadvantaged and minority populations of students, as seen in **Table 5.7**. Rates of high school completion are higher among White populations than among persons of color for the freshman cohort graduating in 2021. Exceptions are the Asian and American Indian populations, which have higher graduation rates than Whites. It should be noted that these populations are much smaller than other racial groups in the county, as seen in **Table 5.2**. The graduation rate for the entire cohort as a whole lags behind the statewide average. Students who are economically disadvantaged and

students who are homeless have rates of high school completion that are lower than their peers.

Table 5.6 Chautauqua County Student Demographic

	2017-2018		2020-2021	
	K-12 Enrollment	18,032		17,188
Male	9,201	51.1%	8,719	50.7%
Female	8,831	48.9%	8,469	49.3%
English Language Learners	652	3.6%	638	3.7%
Students with Disabilities	2,479	13.7%	2,632	15.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	10,513	58.3%	10,121	58.9%
Homeless	204	1.1%	90	0.5%

Table 5.7 Chautauqua County 2021 Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity, Freshman Cohort

	Chautauqua County	New York State
All Students	85%	86%
White	88%	90%
Black/African American	72%	80%
American Indian	88%	82%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	100%	92%
Multi-Racial	71%	84%
Hispanic/Latino	74%	80%
Economically Disadvantaged	79%	81%
English Language Learners	62%	61%
Homeless	58%	69%

Research has shown an association between higher educational attainment and higher earnings. Nationally, 77% of children whose parents have less than a high school diploma live in low income families. For children whose parents have a high school diploma but no college education, 62% live in low-income families (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2019).

The correlation between educational attainment and poverty in Chautauqua County is evident in census data, as shown in **Chart 5.2**. While 31.1% of Chautauqua County residents who have not graduated high school

Chart 5.2 Poverty Rate by Educational Attainment in Chautauqua County

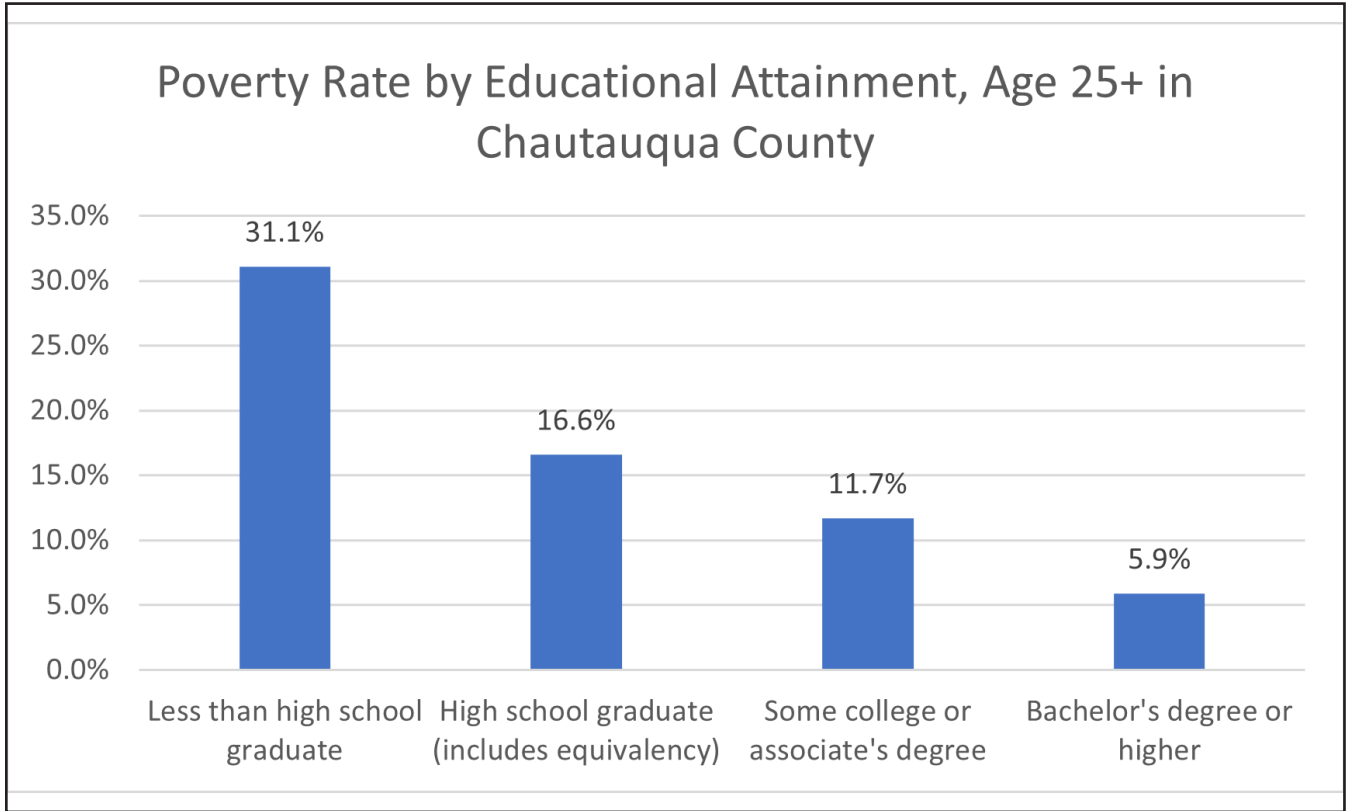
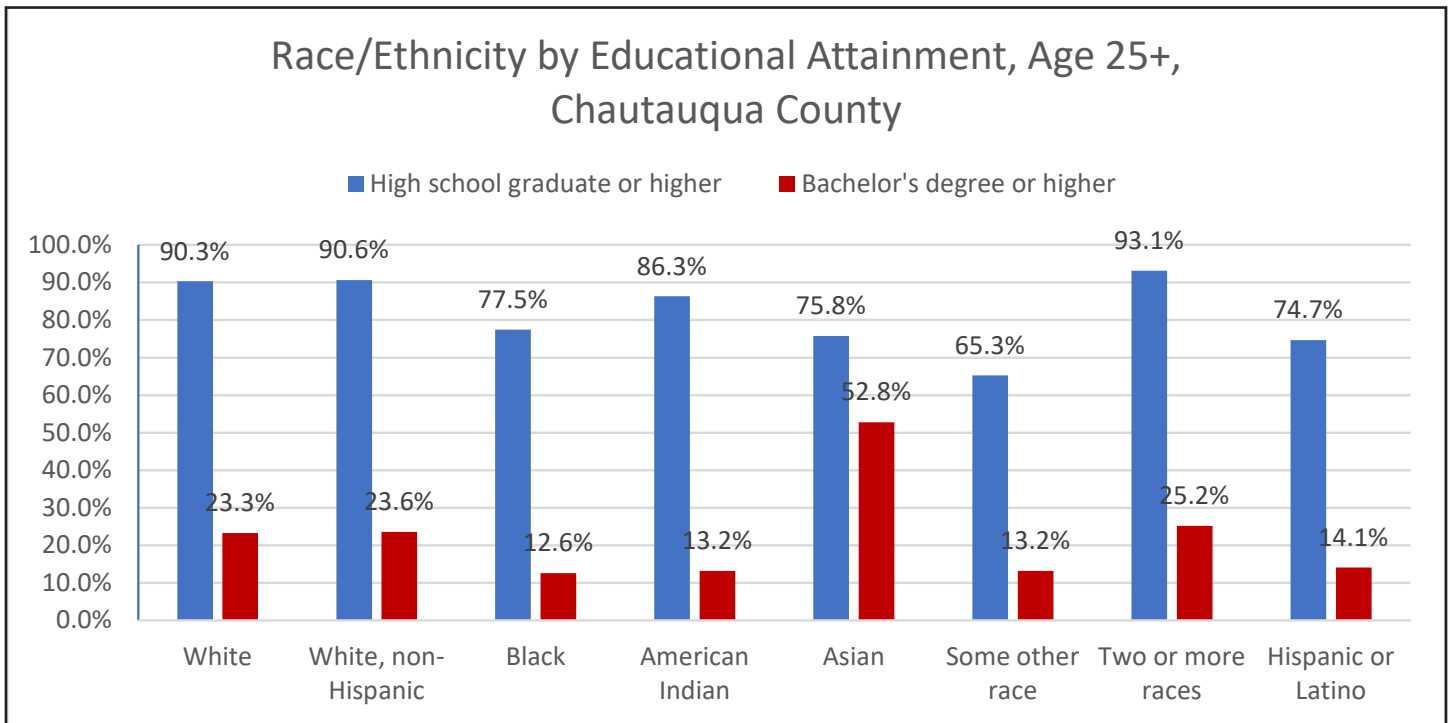


Chart 5.3 Race/Ethnicity by Educational Attainment in Chautauqua County



live in poverty, the rate of poverty is just 5.9% for those with a Bachelor's degree or higher. (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 data)

Chart 5.3 illustrates the racial and ethnic disparities with regard to educational attainment among Chautauque County's population over the age of 25. White, non-Hispanic individuals graduate high school in higher proportion than all other racial and ethnic populations, with the exception of those who are two or more races. White individuals, whether or not they are of Hispanic ethnicity, attain at least a Bachelor's degree more often than minorities, with the exception of Asians and those who are two or more races. The Asian population attains Bachelor's or higher degrees in greater percentages than Whites, but exist in much smaller numbers in the county - less than 1% of the population.

Chautauque County is home to three institutes of higher learning. SUNY Fredonia is a public, four year university that also offers graduate degree programs. Jamestown Community College (JCC) is a public two year college offering associate degrees and certificate level programs. Jamestown Business College is a private college offering associate and bachelor level degrees.

A number of initiatives are currently underway in Chautauque County that are aimed at preparing young people for technical and manufacturing careers that are in demand. Many have outreach initiatives that specifically target the involvement of young women and girls. JCC operates a Manufacturing Technology Institute that trains students in advanced skills on actual equipment they will encounter in local industry jobs. Dream It Do It, an initiative of the Manufacturer's Association of the Southern Tier, works to promote manufacturing as a career choice with a focus on inspiring youth to attain the advanced skills needed in the workforce. Several local public schools are offering courses in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields to promote careers in the industry by providing hands-on learning. The Western NY P-TECH Academy, operated by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) also provides education in skilled trades to prepare students for high demand careers. A high level of collaboration exists between these programs and local schools to ensure youth are aware of advanced manufacturing options when making career choices. The Cassadaga Job Corps also offers education and job training.

At-Risk Youth

A number of issues exist in Chautauque County

that point to a critical need to engage youth who are disconnected from family or community, or otherwise at risk. Some of the indicators of risk in Chautauque County that have been compiled by the NYS Council on Children and Families Kids' Well-Being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC) are listed below:

- 55.0% of Chautauque County children in grades K-12 in public schools were eligible for free or reduced price lunch in the 2019/2020 school year, an indicator of high poverty.
- The drop-out rate for Chautauque County schools for the freshman cohort graduating in 2019 was 8.4%, compared to 5.1% for NY State.
- The rate of children ages 0-17 in indicated cases of child abuse and maltreatment is 36.6 per 1,000 in Chautauque County for 2020, compared to 14.6 per 1,000 for all of NY State.

Some of the other factors that put children and youth in Chautauque County at risk are described in other chapters of this Community Needs Assessment. Data regarding homelessness can be found in Chapter 2: Housing. Data that relates to child and young adult health, including adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases, can be found in Chapter 3: Health.

Youth Services

The Chautauque County Department of Health and Human Services provides the majority of government-based services for at-risk children and youth in the county. These include preventive services and foster care provided by Juvenile Services and Independent Living Teams, as well as Child Protective Services (CPS) that investigates reports concerning the abuse or maltreatment of children. Foster care services provide nurturing homes to children on a temporary basis when their parents are unable to care for them. Children are placed in foster homes in situations where they have been removed from their own families due to abuse, neglect or other family problems that endanger their safety.

The Chautauque County Department of Health and Human Services Annual Reports for 2020 and 2021 provide the data displayed in **Table 5.9**. A DHHS representative explained that several factors contributed to the decreases in juvenile justice numbers above,

Table 5.9 Chautauqua County Health and Human Services Youth Data

	2020	2021
Juvenile Justice		
Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)	110	103
Juvenile Delinquents	136	10
Juveniles in NYS OCFS Custody	8	4
Indicated Reports of Abuse/Neglect	488	397
Custodial Care		
In Foster Homes	55	56
In Institutions	10	3
In Group Homes	2	4
In Therapeutic Foster Homes	30	24
Child Support Collections		
Caseload	10,910	10,069
Cases with Current Collections	70.75%	72.27%
Cases with Arrears Collections	44.42%	47.66%

including the existence of more community-based programs to assist families and prevent entry into the system. Other factors include the closures of family court and services that employ mandated reporters that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chautauqua County Youth Bureau served over 5,000 children and youth in 2021. They work in collaboration with a network of other county government, public, and private entities and service providers to develop a comprehensive range of opportunities for youth of Chautauqua County. The Youth Bureau supports youth residential programs operated by Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc., including the Safe House (runaway and homeless youth shelter for youth under age 18) and the Transitional Independent Living Program (for homeless youth ages 16-22). The Safe House and two Transitional Independent Living facilities are licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. These two programs typically serve over 100 homeless and at-risk youth annually.

The following data reveals some of the problems faced by youth served at the Safe House from 9/30/2021 – 9/29/2022.

- 100% of youth reported that they or a family member experienced abuse or neglect at home.
- 85% of youth reported that they or a family member have mental health problems such as depression or anxiety.

- 61% of youth received psychological or psychiatric care while in residence
- 52% of youth reported usage of alcohol/drugs
- 90% of youth had involvement with Child Protective Services
- 10% were referred for services to address human trafficking

Safe Harbour is a collaborative program that leverages existing local resources for a trauma-informed response for youth who are survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking (CSEC), as well as for those who are considered at-risk. Since 2016 through 9/30/2022, the Safe Harbour program has identified:

- 221 Chautauqua County youth who are victims of trafficking or at-risk for trafficking/CSEC
- 41 local youth who meet the federal definition of human trafficking
- 143 local youth who are considered to be at a high risk for trafficking/CSEC
- 91.4% of the 221 youth identified are girls
- The average age of referral to the Safe Harbour program is 14.08 years old

TRENDS/DIRECTIONS

As the population of Chautauqua County has continued to decline, children identifying as Hispanic/Latino have become a greater percentage of the enrolled school population. Non-white youth and youth in single parent households continue to be disproportionately affected by both poverty and low educational attainment. Graduation rates in the county, particularly for minorities and disadvantaged students, lag behind NYS averages. Black and multi-racial students graduate high school at significantly lower rates than White students.

Educational attainment is highly correlated to future prospects of economic stability with poverty rates significantly lower for people who earn a Bachelor’s degree versus those who receive a high school diploma or do not graduate from high school. The poverty rate for children in Chautauqua County continues to be much higher than for the total population, primarily correlated

to the number of children living in single parent households.

Rates of school dropout or child abuse and maltreatment are higher in Chautauqua County than statewide averages.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.'s 2022 Community Needs Survey asked community members about issues or concerns for youth in their household over the past 12 months. Of the 78 respondents who indicated there were issues, 57 reported behavioral or emotional problems (73.1%) and 48 reported that bullying was a problem (61.5%). Other issues reported in the survey to a lesser extent included eating disorders, skipping or dropping out of school, smoking, violent behavior, and sexual activity. The Community Needs Survey also asked responders to rate the availability of services and opportunities for youth in the county. Results of the survey indicate the community's perception that there are not enough mentoring programs, career counseling, or crisis services for youth. The survey also revealed a perception that there is some availability, but not enough to meet the need, in the areas of recreational programs, organized sports, after school programs, volunteer opportunities, and opportunities to learn civics and leadership skills. The full survey is included in Appendix I.

There is no question that involvement in community activities helps youth to value their community, provides constructive use of their time, and helps youth build positive relationships with adults and peers. A lack of engagement in meaningful activities can put young people at risk for involvement in criminal activity, substance abuse, or premature sexual activity. Opportunities for youth involvement do exist in the county through extracurricular school activities, recreational and sports programs, and organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs, Scouts BSA, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and others. Given that there are over 30,000 youth under the age of 18 in Chautauqua County, there is a need for additional activities and for outreach to encourage youth to participate. Disconnected youth in particular are vulnerable to at-risk behavior and would benefit from programs that encourage and facilitate involvement in community activities.

Data indicate that many of Chautauqua County's young people have challenges related to poverty or poor school performance. Some cannot live safely with a parent for various reasons or have been forced to leave their home due to turmoil within the family. Homeless

youth may end up in contact with law enforcement or in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems. Outreach programs exist to engage disconnected, at-risk youth and connect them available services, but these resources are not enough to meet the need.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Coordinated positive youth development programs are available throughout the county.
- Availability of local, accredited post-secondary education programs.
- A coordinated effort in the county to promote STEM careers with a focus on local manufacturing needs.

CHALLENGES

- Rates of poverty for children and youth remain high, particularly for single parent families.
- Chautauqua County has high rates of child abuse and neglect.
- Racial and ethnic minorities have disproportionate rates of high school completion and attainment of higher education compared to non-minorities.
- High rates of parents who are unable to care for their children result in elevated numbers of grandparents who are caring for children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue and expand youth development programs and other opportunities to engage youth in meaningful activities.
- Continue to fund assistance programs for disadvantaged families and youth.
- Increase parent education services that teach appropriate discipline, the importance of family engagement, and emotional coping skills.
- Sustain government and community-based mandated reporter services to ensure child maltreatment is addressed.

6. Public Assistance

INTRODUCTION

Public Assistance can be defined as “assistance programs that provide either cash assistance or in-kind benefits (government policies to help improve the living standards of underprivileged groups without cash benefits) to individuals and families from any government entity” (census.gov). As the data demonstrates, income remains low for a significant portion of Chautauqua County residents. The COVID-19 pandemic added a new dimension to this already existing need for public assistance in Chautauqua County (and many areas of the country). In addition to the detrimental health impacts of the pandemic, the resulting conditions have had major impacts on businesses, employment, education, food insecurity, housing stability, and childcare.

Although the poverty rate is down from previous figures (17.8% at the 2020 ACS compared to 18.5% at the 2017 ACS), the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of public assistance can't be determined precisely as the county is still experiencing the fall-out of this crisis. A higher level of poverty means that more people will rely on public assistance as a means of paying for food, rent, and other needs. Nevertheless, the available data provides insight into the county's use of public assistance funding and the position of Chautauqua County relative to the state and the nation.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

A variety of federal programs provide assistance throughout the United States, many of them dating back to the Great Depression or even earlier. While the programs are themselves federal, administration of most of these programs is delegated to states, which may have differences in restrictions or income limits depending on the state of residency. New York State has several of its own public assistance programs that may combine federal funds with state funds. The data that follows is a look at three broad categories and three specific sub-categories of public assistance utilized during the years 2019-2021.

Table 6.1 represents the numbers of adults and children in Chautauqua County receiving benefits as of 2021 per the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

Table 6.1: Monthly Caseload in Chautauqua County

Type of Assistance	Adult Recipients	Child Recipients	Expenditures
Temporary Assistance	1,289	1,812	\$10,504,384
Family Assistance	389	1,323	\$5,045,760
Safety Net	900	489	\$5,458,624

Types of Assistance

The three broad categories are Temporary Assistance, Family Assistance, and Safety Net with the corresponding sub-categories of SSI (Supplemental Security Income), SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program). These sub-categories fall under Temporary Assistance primarily and with some overlap with the two other broad categories. Temporary Assistance as defined by OTDA is, “Temporary Assistance (TA), also known as Public Assistance (PA), is temporary help for needy adults, and children. If you are unable to work, can't find a job, or your job does not pay enough, TA may be able to help you pay for your expenses.” The second is defined as, “Family Assistance (FA) provides cash assistance to eligible needy families that include a minor child living with a parent/parents or a caretaker relative. FA operates under federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) guidelines. Safety Net Assistance (SNA) is defined as providing “cash assistance to eligible needy individuals and families who are not eligible for FA” (Source: otda.ny.gov).

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides monthly financial assistance to disabled adults and children with limited income and resources, as well as those aged 65 or older. Eligibility depends on factors such as income, other benefits received, and other financial resources owned and housing status). In Chautauqua County, 4,716 persons received a total of \$35,458,743 worth of NY State benefits in 2021 (Source: otda.ny.gov).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, provides monthly assistance for the purchase of food and groceries. Eligibility is determined based on factors

such as income, employment status, disability status, and more. Not all food items can be purchased with SNAP benefits; for example, alcoholic beverages, pet food, and prepared food are ineligible for purchases. The NYS OTDA reports a total of 12,609 SNAP benefit recipients (households) in 2021 in Chautauqua County, a decrease from the 2016 total of 13,457 households. However, expenditures in Chautauqua County for SNAP increased to \$65,382,448 for 2021 above the 2016 total of \$39,209,681. (Source: otda.ny.gov)

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides low-income households with energy assistance via energy or fuel payments to utility providers, as well as emergency assistance with essential heating equipment that needs to be repaired or replaced. Income-eligible households are normally eligible to receive each benefit once per winter. Emergency HEAP is typically available from January 2 to March 15 for persons eligible for HEAP who have an emergency energy issue, such as heat on the verge of being shut off and can be used on top of regular HEAP benefits. NYS OTDA reports that there were 11,129 benefits authorized in 2021 for a total expenditure of \$4,911,958 in Chautauqua County (Source: otda.ny.gov).

Additional Programs

- Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement (HERR) is an additional program for repairing or replacing essential heating equipment in homes.
- HEAP Clean and Tune is available from April 1 to November 1 and provides energy efficiency services, such as cleaning of heating equipment, installation of carbon monoxide detectors, and more.
- Cooling Assistance is open typically from May 1 to August 30 and provides air conditioning or a fan for homes where a person meets income requirements and has a medical condition exacerbated by heat.

Funds for additional HEAP services tend to be limited, but these include: the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides food, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum, as well as infants and children up to age 5 who may be at nutritional risk. Recipients must meet certain income and residency requirements as well.

Diversion services are a once-only, alternative form of assistance for persons who are at risk of needing Temporary Assistance, with the purpose of helping them obtain or maintain employment so that they will not need further assistance. Diversion services are administered at the county level and are used to address issues that prevent people from employment, such as transportation or work-related expenses (i.e., uniforms, work boots, or tools).

ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program) was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to NYS OTDA, "The New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) will provide significant economic relief to help low and moderate-income households at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing rental arrears, temporary rental assistance and utility arrears assistance." (source: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/emergency-rental-assistance/>)

Other social insurance programs that are available to seniors, veterans, the unemployed, or people who are injured on the job are not generally considered to be public assistance programs. These include Social Security, Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, unemployment insurance compensation, and Workers' compensation.



TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

The three broad categories of Temporary Assistance, Family Assistance, and Safety Net with the subcategories of SNAP, HEAP, and SSI have been trending downward in New York State over the past ten years, although in some categories, the usage appears to be increasing in the short-term. This is particularly true of SNAP benefits, which have seen a steady increase in usage across New York over the past three years.

Charts 6.1 and 6.2 illustrates the six-year trends in

New York State and Chautauqua County. For Chautauqua County, the number of Temporary Assistance cases decreased by 38.1% between 2016 and 2021, while Family Assistance decreased by 29.0%, and Safety Net decreased by 46.6%. There was also a decrease in SSI and SNAP usage in Chautauqua County, but these programs only decreased slightly with SSI decreasing 2.6% and SNAP decreasing 0.1% from 2019 to 2021.

Across New York State there were also decreases in all categories of assistance. For New York State, Temporary Assistance decreased 17.7%, Family Assistance decreased 31.0%, while Safety Net decreased 8.4% from 2016 to 2021. During the same period, SSI usage decreased 5.1%, while SNAP increased 10.7% in New York.

For New York State and Chautauqua County, expenditures generally correspond to the trends with number of cases served. Between 2016 and 2021,

there have been marked decreases in expenditures for Temporary Assistance (TA), Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, and for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), as illustrated in **Chart 6.3** and **Chart 6.4**. However, expenditures for SNAP and HEAP went up significantly in Chautauqua County and New York State, due to increases in benefits per household.

The most significant shift in benefits has occurred with the SNAP program. After many years of decreasing usage of SNAP, the number of cases in New York increased by 10.7% between 2019 and 2021, while the number of cases in Chautauqua County remained about even. This occurred while many other public assistance programs saw a decrease in usage. Expenditures also increased by 89.3% in Chautauqua County and 52.6% in New York State during the period. This trend indicates that food security remains a critical concern for families in poverty

Chart 6.1

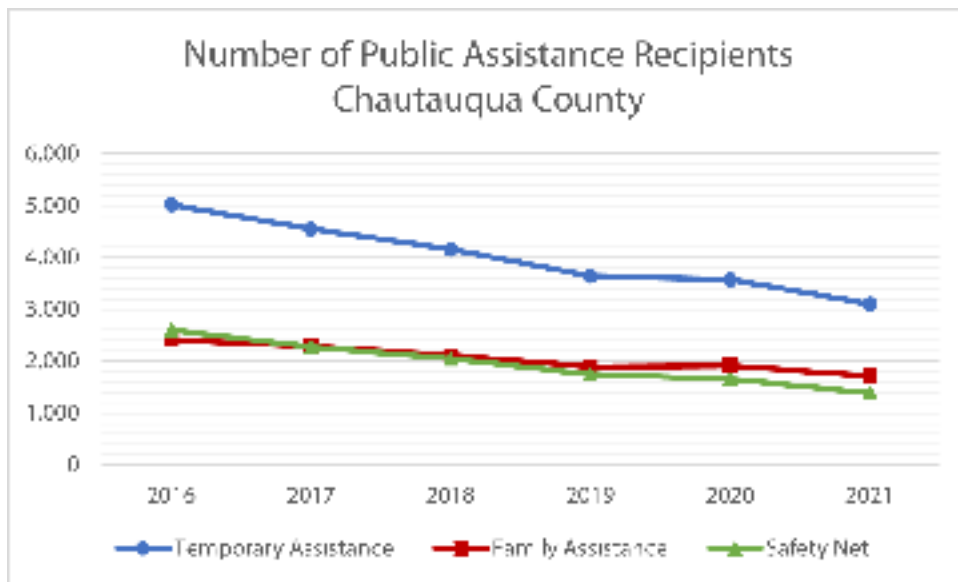


Chart 6.2

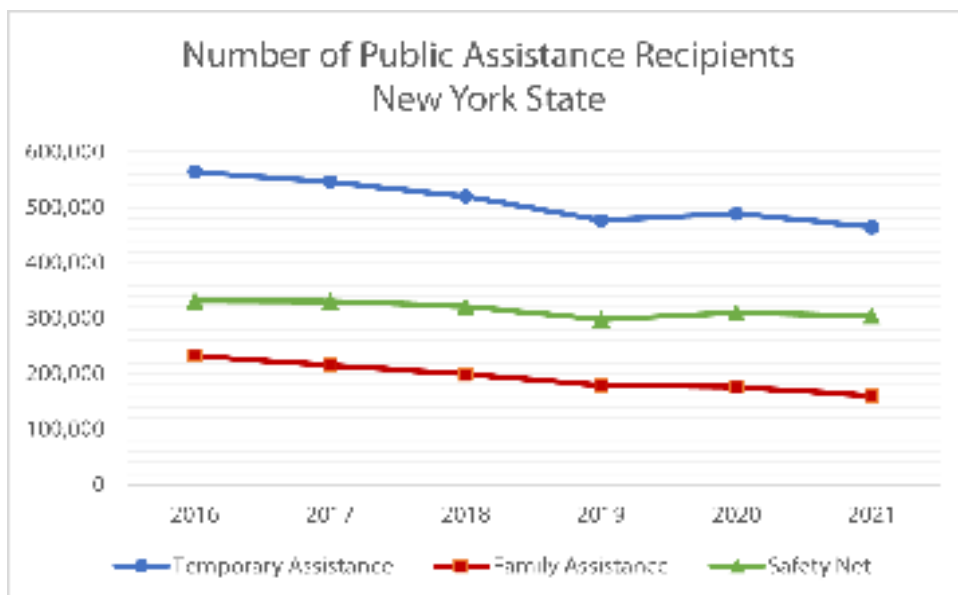


Chart 6.3

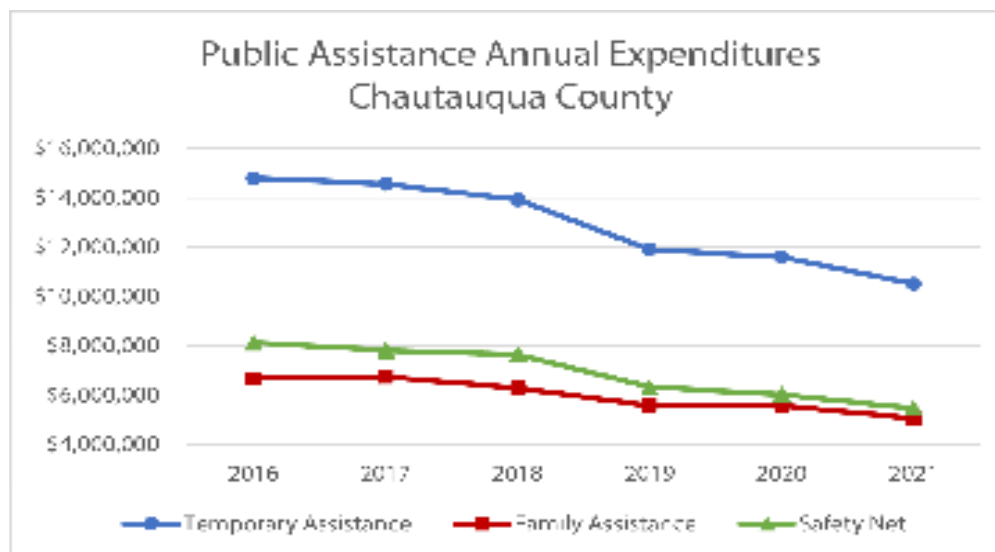
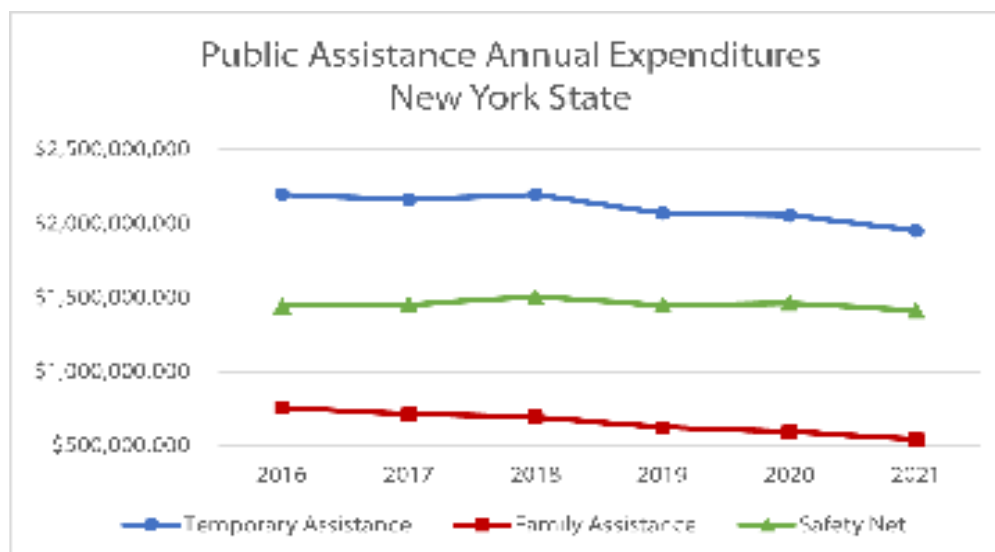


Chart 6.4



and that needs are remaining the same or increasing despite overall improvements in the poverty rate.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

The working poor are well aware of the “benefits cliff” that occurs as household earnings increase. Those who are near the poverty line and eligible for a variety of assistance find that even a dollar increase in earnings can make them ineligible for assistance. Often, the increase in wages is not enough to offset the lost benefits. Households that are just above poverty according to government guidelines are not earning enough to be self-sufficient.

A 2019 Pew Research Poll indicated that, “Americans

are divided in their views on government aid to poor and needy people, and partisan differences on these questions are among the largest seen in the survey. In addition, the level of household income is tied to attitudes on these questions, with those earning less more supportive of government aid. Overall, 40% say the government should provide more assistance to people in need, while 26% say the government should provide less assistance; 33% say the current level of assistance to people in need is about right.”

Also, the Pew Report points out that public support drops when assistance is referred to as “welfare.” The history of public assistance in the U.S. is fraught with the belief that public assistance programs create a culture of dependency and encourage people to stay out of the

workforce; however, studies regularly show that programs such as Medicaid and cash assistance increase workforce participation and can attain success in lifting people out of poverty.

COI's 2022 Community Needs Survey (Appendix I) asked residents about their usage of public assistance programs. When asked if they sought Public Assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic and if so, what type, the results were consistent with OTDA data: 60% of respondents did not seek any PA. Of the type that was sought, SNAP benefits were the most sought, at 31.6% of responders, and Temporary Housing was sought the least, at 2%. This is likely due to the moratorium on evictions during the pandemic.

Community perceptions notwithstanding, public assistance benefits will continue to be necessary for those experiencing hardship in Chautauqua County, statewide, and nationally.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Public assistance programs provide relief to households experiencing economic insecurities and prevent crisis situations such as homelessness.
- There are several initiatives and programs designed to help people transition off of public assistance through skill development and job creation.
- NY State administers several programs with both federal and state funding to address the basic needs of people in poverty.
- Temporary programs were created during the COVID-19 pandemic to help with rental arrears and prevent homelessness.
- A wide array of nonprofit agencies that provide supportive services exist in Chautauqua County to assist vulnerable populations.

CHALLENGES

- Public attitudes toward public assistance shift depending on whether or not it's referred to as "welfare," as a negative stigma against the term perpetuates the idea that its recipients are undeserving of the amount of aid given.
- Food security remains a crucial challenge for families in poverty, as needs remaining high

despite a slight decrease in the county poverty rate.

- There is collaboration among nonprofit agencies to provide comprehensive services efficiently and effectively to meet the various causes of poverty.
- Challenges that were exacerbated by the fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated losses of income have continued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A greater resurgence of the county economy is required in order to produce more meaningful change in keeping public assistance expenditures low.
- Revise federal poverty guidelines to help the poor avoid the "benefits cliff".
- Provide information to the public counteracting the negative connotations of "welfare" and "public assistance".
- Continue and expand coalitions between government and nonprofit providers in order to avoid duplication of services and expedite the process for services for those in need of temporary assistance.
- Continue and expand collaborations among existing nonprofit agencies, including local food banks, to provide services and meet the continued needs of individuals and families.

7. Transportation

INTRODUCTION

The availability of reliable, affordable transportations is one of the most critical issues faced by low-income people in Chautauqua County. The rural nature of the county presents transportation challenges for those seeking employment or needing medical attention, as the majority of jobs and health-related services are located in the two major urban areas of Jamestown and Dunkirk. The public depends heavily on a well-developed, affordable, transportation system to be able to access employment opportunities and health care, and to shop for necessities.

Transportation is also a key issue in local economic development efforts. The availability of highway, rail, and air transportation is a determining factor in decisions by businesses to locate or expand in Chautauqua County.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

Chautauqua County is a predominately rural county with 1,062 square miles of land area. It is the 14th largest of New York's 62 counties and is located the furthest west on the shores of Lake Erie. The Chautauqua County Division of Transportation is responsible for 552 center-line miles of roads, 308 bridges, and 258 major culverts that make up the county-owned highway system. In terms of the highway system, Interstate 86 runs east/west through the county, while Interstate 90 runs parallel to Lake Erie beginning in Ripley and heading east to Erie County. State Route 60 is a major route that connects the north and south ends of the county.

Private Transportation

Private vehicles are the primary source of transportation in Chautauqua County. As shown in **Table 7.1**, data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 American Community Survey illustrate the relative importance of privately owned vehicles as a means of getting to work in Chautauqua County compared to New York State.

On average, employees in Chautauqua County have shorter commute times (18.5 minutes) than the average U.S. worker (26.9 minutes). A small percentage of the workforce in Chautauqua County (1.24%) has "super commutes" in excess of 90 minutes.

Census data from the 2020 American Community Survey indicate that 13.4% of households in Chautauqua County have no personal vehicle available. The costs of owning a vehicle are prohibitive for some families. In addition to the vehicle purchase price, there are costs for registration, inspection, maintenance, insurance, and gasoline that must be considered. Families with young children are also required by NYS law to have child safety seats.

Table 7.1 Means of Transportation to Work

Means of Transportation to Work	Chautauqua County	New York State
Drive alone	79.6%	52.3%
Carpool	9.2%	6.4%
Public transportation	0.2%	26.2%
Bicycle or walk	6.3%	8.2%
Work at home	4.7%	6.9%

Bus Service

The Chautauqua Area Regional Transit System (CARTS) is a county-operated transportation system that provides fixed and on-demand routes throughout Chautauqua County. Fixed route services are offered within the more urbanized areas of Jamestown and Dunkirk, and the Villages of Celeron, Falconer, Lakewood, and Fredonia. A wide variety of routes span all of Chautauqua County – Ripley to Silver Creek, Jamestown to Dunkirk and other rural areas. Their services are fee-based and are open to the public. They offer Dial-a-Ride (door-to-door or curb-to-curb) service for individuals with disabilities and each bus is equipped with a lift for wheelchair access or for those who are unable to climb stairs. Bike racks are also on every bus.

Several bus companies that are based outside of the county operate along major routes and have regular stops in the more populated areas. Coach USA maintains a bus service out of Erie, PA and operates regularly scheduled routes between Jamestown, Olean

(Cattaraugus County) and Buffalo (Erie County). The Cedar Bus Co., based in Erie County, offers group charters and individual transport by scheduling in advance. Their buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts. D&F Travel provides deluxe coach tours, local shuttles, and charter services.

Some of the schools in the county use bus companies to transport their students daily and for off-site trips, instead of maintaining their own fleets of buses. Companies currently include First Student (Northern Chautauqua County), Corvus Bus and Charter (Jamestown). The Student Association of SUNY at Fredonia offers a Campus Community shuttle that can be accessed on campus and at nearby stops off campus. A shuttle service is also available at Fredonia Place for residents.

Medical Transportation

Much of Western NY is characterized by a population that is demographically older, economically poorer, and has a higher percentage of disabled people compared to the population statewide. These are all indicators of the need for reliable and affordable transportation for the high numbers of residents needing access to medical care. Chautauqua County has been designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. Residents often must drive long distances to access medical specialists, such as those that are available in Buffalo, NY or Erie, PA.

Individuals with disabilities and others needing transportation to medical appointments may access providers that have accessible vehicles, such as CARTS. Chautauqua Works, and The Resource Center, continue to work toward a Chautauqua County Transportation Work Plan in collaboration with CARTS, elected officials, community organizations, service providers, and other stakeholders to ensure access to transportation for all who need it.

Other agencies providing medical transportation services include:

- The Chautauqua County Veterans Service Agency provides a free van service for veterans to the VA Hospital in Buffalo that is scheduled through CARTS.
- The American Cancer Society has a Road to Recovery Program, which uses volunteers to provide transportation to cancer patients for medical visits.



- Adventure Transportation is based in Dunkirk and provides Medicaid transportation, courtesy prescription pickups, and courier and parcel delivery between facilities.
- Fancee Limousine provides non-emergency medical transportation services.
- TEAM Services Medical Transportation provides non-emergency medical transportation, such as for doctor appointments, hospital discharges, an physical therapy appointments. They have wheelchair accessible vans and minivans.
- The RO Foundation assists local medical patients with major illnesses and their families with monies to offset the cost associated with transportation to and from medical appointments from treatments.
- Emergency medical transportation response is provided by WCA Ambulance Services and Alstar Ambulance. Starflight provides medical transport by helicopter to medical services in Buffalo, NY, or Erie, PA or other large hospitals.
- Eligible patients may access medical transportation that is payable by Medicaid. This can include mileage reimbursement for using a personal vehicle or taxi service, bus passes provided by a local caseworker, or ambulette/ambulance services. Medicaid will pay for the most medically appropriate and cost-effective level of transportation to and from services that are covered by Medicaid.

Taxis and Ridesharing

There are just two taxi companies in the county, one

that operates from the Dunkirk and one that operates from Jamestown. Scheduling is made easier by mobile applications that allow riders to schedule a taxi from their smartphone. Uber and Lyft ride sharing services are also available in Chautauqua County. These drivers use their own vehicles to transport passengers.

Airports

Chautauqua County operates two public general aviation airports that are managed by the county; the Jamestown Airport (JHW) and the Dunkirk Airport (DKK). Each airport provides a wide range of general and business aviation services, including flight instruction, charter services, fueling services, maintenance services, hangar rentals, deicing, and other essential services. Traditional Fixed Base Operator services are provided through a contracted third-party Fixed Base Operator. Centric Aviation is the FBO lease-operator at both airports. A detailed description of flight line services, fees and hours of operation can be found on their website: <http://centricaviation.com>

Chautauqua County's airports provide access for flight operations year-round. Attended hours of operation and available services are published online at: https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/Aero_Data/Airport_Data/

Neither airport offers commercial airline service, but both are used by private pilots and business partners. The Federal Express office is located next to the terminal building at the Jamestown Airport, and the local Civil Air Patrol unit meets there weekly. A Flight School is available at the Jamestown Airport that is run by Jamestown Aviation, Co., LLC.

Chautauqua County residents needing commercial air service most often travel to Buffalo-Niagara International Airport or Erie International Airport to access flights by major airlines. Both airports are 50 to 100 miles from Chautauqua County, depending on the starting point.

Railroads

Amtrak service crosses the country, but riders from Chautauqua County must travel to Buffalo, Depew, or Erie, PA to embark. Amtrak offers bus travel from Dunkirk, Fredonia, and Jamestown to their stops via the NYS Thruway.

There are six railroad companies that provide freight service to the southwestern NY State and northwestern Pennsylvania region. Three are Class I railroads: Norfolk Southern, Canadian Pacific, and CSX, although the

latter two do not provide service on the Southern Tier Extension line) and two are regional railroads (Western New York and Pennsylvania Buffalo and Pittsburgh, and New York and Lake Erie, although the latter two do not provide service on the Southern Tier Extension Line).

Bikes and Walkways

There are various trails and bikeways throughout the county used for hiking, cycling, cross country skiing, snowmobiling and other recreational purposes. Chautauqua County maintains the 43-mile Overland Trails system comprising the Earl Cadot Eastside Overland Trail and the Fred J. Cusimano Westside Overland Trail. Equestrian trails from Charlotte to Cherry Creek. Chautauqua Rails to Trails is a non-profit organization that develops and maintains recreational trails for personal use on or near abandoned railways. The trails are used for hiking, bicycling, running, treasure hunting, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.



Lakes and Waterways

According to information provided by the Chautauqua County Visitor's Bureau, the county has five lakes and numerous waterways. The northwestern border of Chautauqua County is made up of nearly 50 miles of shoreline along Lake Erie. Chautauqua Lake is a naturally-formed lake that is 17 miles long and up to two miles wide. Cassadaga Lake is made up of three inter-connecting glacial lakes. Smaller man-made lakes include Findley Lake and Bear Lake. All of the lakes are popular recreational spots for fishing, swimming, boating, jet skiing, canoeing and kayaking.

The Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail is comprised of two

25-mile flat-water trails used for canoeing and kayaking. The Cassadaga Creek (South Stockton to Falconer) and the Conewango Creek (north Kennedy to Kiantone) comprise the waterway trail.

Horse and Buggy

New York State contains the fifth largest Amish population in the U.S., with the three major settlements in Clymer and Mayville in Chautauqua County, and Conewango Valley in the adjacent County of Cattaraugus. Horse and buggy remains a popular mode of transport for the Amish, which is a safety concern because they share the roadways with other vehicles. As there are no official statistics available for accidents involving horse and buggies and other vehicles, it is difficult to know how many such accidents take place. According to the NYS DMV Drivers Manual, a “slow-moving vehicle” symbol (a reflective orange triangle) should be displayed on the back of the buggy.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

Ride Sharing

Ride sharing services are available in Chautauqua County in the form of Uber and Lyft but driver availability is limited, especially in the more rural areas. Apps on a smart phone can be used to order private rides on demand. All scheduling and payments are handled through the app.

Energy Efficiency

The Charge NY initiative is part of New York State’s goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030. Options will include hybrid, and full electric vehicles. Implemented by NYSERDA, Charge NY includes incentives to purchase Electric Vehicles (EV) which are more energy efficient than gasoline vehicles and cost 50-70% less per mile to operate. According to Charge NY resources, the New York Power Authority’s Evolve NY program is a key pillar of the state’s plan to become a leader in electric vehicle infrastructure. Evolve NY’s goal is to make electric vehicles an affordable viable option as part of a larger initiative to provide cleaner air for New Yorkers. The initiative includes a major expansion in the state’s fast charging stations, programs to educate consumers about the benefits of EVs, and incentives to promote their adoption. The New York Power Authority is dedicating \$250 million through 2025 to the Evolve NY

program, with the goal of making electric vehicles easy to own in New York State and decarbonizing the state’s transportation sector. Evolve NY is hoping to install fast chargers throughout the state and is part of New York State’s broader goal to have at least 800 new EV fast charging stations installed through 2025. According to Liberty Access Tech, currently there are 12 public electric vehicle charging locations available in Chautauqua County, NY. The high cost of gasoline may influence more drivers to consider purchasing an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Infrastructure

Many local municipalities have adopted Complete Streets policies. According to the Post Journal, the Complete Streets policy adopted by Chautauqua County recommended that all modes of travel be considered in the design of the project. Projects should include the feasibility of installing sidewalks, paving of shoulders, lane striping, bicycle lanes, share the road signs, crosswalks, road configurations, traffic calmers and other similar initiatives. Dunkirk’s Lake Shore Drive Complete Streets design includes separated bike lanes, a median, curbing, green infrastructure and pedestrian amenities that were completed in 2022.

Chautauqua County is working hard to make roads more accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and others. There is a push underway in Chautauqua County to increase pedestrian safety along state roadways. In rural communities, state highways often are the main streets of the community. State highways have a significant impact on a rural community, where people go and how business is conducted in those communities.

The construction of the roundabout at the major intersection of NYS Routes 20 and 60 in Fredonia was completed in 2020. According to the DOT, roundabouts have been shown to increase safety at intersections and facilitate the smooth flow of traffic.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Access to transportation continues to be an issue for low income households in Chautauqua County. The high cost of gas and other challenges have affected how residents travel. The responses to a Community Needs Survey conducted by Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. in 2022 (Appendix I) suggest that some residents have recently changed their travel habits. Over 48% of responders said they canceled a long trip or otherwise decreased their travel plans due to the high cost of gas,

and nearly 22% of responders indicated that the rise in gas prices caused delayed payments of other bills. Over 48% said they were forced to pay more for gas but did not decrease travel. The use of ride sharing or carpooling was increased by very few responders. Over 21% of responders said that the high cost of gas has caused them to consider switching to an electric vehicle. Based on the information from Insurify.com, the average cost to own a vehicle in NYS, including insurance, tax, maintenance and gas, is \$4,707. This is 5% less than the national average.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Chautauqua County is well serviced by interstate highway and freight access.
- Electric vehicles are becoming more popular, and more charging stations are available in the county. They help to save money and reduce air pollution.
- Smartphone apps used for ride sharing and taxi service make ride scheduling more convenient for the rider.
- The Chautauqua County Transportation Coalition is made up of representatives from various transportation providers and human service agencies in Chautauqua County. The goal is to provide and improve transportation services to seniors, disabled, and low-income families/individuals.

CHALLENGES

- Limited public transportation makes it difficult for people with low paying jobs to get to work and access medical care.
- Weather conditions in Western NY often present challenging driving conditions and delays in the winter months.
- Neither of the county's two airports are currently used for commercial flights.
- There are no Amtrak stops in the county.
- Horse and buggies sharing the roads create a safety hazard, particularly at night because they

are difficult to see.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support the efforts of the Chautauqua County Transportation Coalition to develop a plan for transportation access for all residents, particularly the most vulnerable populations.
- The county would benefit from a high quality, extended hour public transportation system.
- Require lights on the back of Amish buggies to make them more visible at night.
- Support efforts to bring an Amtrak stop back to Chautauqua County.



8. Technology

INTRODUCTION

Each year, new technology is created that has an impact on the way we work, attend school, shop, access health care, and otherwise interact. This became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic like never before, when social distancing became the norm and people worldwide were forced to rely on technology to connect with each other. While rapidly advancing technology facilitates communication and keeps us better informed, populations that lack adequate resources for accessing it can be further disadvantaged.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

Computer and internet use is prevalent in the everyday lives of most Americans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 91.1% of households in NYS owned a computer in 2020. Of those households, 85.2% had a broadband internet subscription. Residents in Chautauqua County report somewhat lower figures, as 86.4% of the population reported owning a computer and 79.6% reported having a broadband internet subscription. County residents who do not own a computer can access them at most of the community libraries, but limited public transportation can make access difficult. In a community survey conducted by COI in 2022, 87.59% of respondents reported having access to broadband internet. However, 10.90% reported not having enough bandwidth to meet their streaming needs. Over half of survey responders (59.02%) said they primarily use streaming services to watch television.

Access to technology became an important point of concern during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people needed technology to work from home and schools were operating remotely. According to the Pew Research Center, 26% of home broadband users in the U.S. report being worried about paying for high-speed home internet connection. This shows the growing importance of programs to help those in need.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Emergency Broadband Connectivity fund was established in December 2020 to help families access broadband internet. This program was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the realization that lack of internet access was a significant barrier

for many individuals and families. The program gave qualifying families a \$50 discount on monthly internet service. In 2021, the program was replaced with the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides a \$30 discount on monthly internet service. For both programs, those living on Tribal lands receive a \$75 per month discount. To be eligible, a member of the household must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participation in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, or Lifeline;
- Approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program.
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

Based on Federal Poverty Guidelines alone, approximately 22.5% of Chautauqua County's population would qualify for this benefit. Many other families qualify under the other criteria.

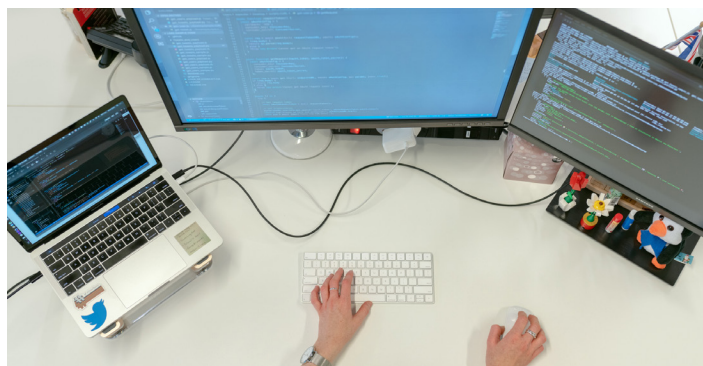
Smartphone usage continues to be an ever-present element of daily life for many in the country. According to the Pew Research Center, 85% of the U.S. population uses a smartphone that connects to the internet, which is much higher than the 70.4% who use a smartphone in Chautauqua County (data.census.gov). Of those responding to COI's Community Survey (Appendix 1), 91.35% report using a smartphone. Just 5.64% reported using a cell phone that is not a smart phone, and 3.01% said they primarily use a landline (non-mobile) phone.

While most consumer electronics such as smart phones and computers tend to be expensive, options exist for low-income residents in Chautauqua County to integrate themselves technologically. The Lifeline assistance program has provided people with low or no-cost phone services since 1985, and in New York State, residents who participate in public assistance programs such as Medicaid and SNAP are eligible to receive a free smartphone as well.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

Although Chautauqua County lags behind the nation somewhat in the use of technology, it has the potential to catch up as technological advances permeate just about every aspect of our lives. Some of the many ways in which technology is transforming our day-to-day activities include:

- Colleges and universities offer distance learning programs that allow people to avoid transportation problems and in some cases, to work at their own pace.
- Health services can be delivered through telemedicine, allowing health professionals to diagnose and monitor patients remotely, addressing mobility and access problems.
- Online shopping has escalated, offering convenience for the consumer but often negatively impacting the bottom line of brick and mortar stores.
- Satellite-based Global Positioning Devices (GPS) have transformed navigation for all types of transportation worldwide.
- Streaming media allows a user to start playing digital video or audio content before the entire file has been transmitted. Streaming services such as YouTube, Netflix, and Hulu are changing the way many people watch television shows and films.
- Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter make it easy for individuals, businesses and other entities to interconnect and communicate.



While the value of having access to communication and information at our fingertips cannot be understated, the widespread use of technological devices also makes us susceptible to online dangers. Children learn to use technology at an early age and computers with internet access have become educational staples in our schools. According to a research study conducted by Boston Children's Hospital Digital Wellness Lab, the average age that parents report getting their children a cellphone is 10 years old.

Technology has made our lives easier and allowed for advanced ways to connect with each other on a global scale. According to the Pew Research Institute, 31% of American adults report being online almost constantly, and 48% report going online several times a day. Children are learning to use new technologies at a very young age, which become part of their everyday lives.

Smartphone usage has also become an ever-present element of daily life for many in the country. Since the first iPhone was introduced only in 2007, this shift in technology has been particularly massive. Most people carry a device that can connect to the internet with them wherever they go, transforming the way we interact with each other and access information.

5G is the fifth-generation technology standard for broadband cellular networks, which cellular phone companies began deploying worldwide in 2019. 5G networks are predicted to account for 25% of the worldwide mobile technology market by 2025, according to the GSM Association and Statista. The new networks have higher download speeds, eventually up to 10 gigabits per second. In addition to 5G being faster than existing networks, 5G has higher bandwidth and can therefore connect a larger number of different devices, improving the quality of internet services in crowded areas. Due to the increased bandwidth, it is expected the networks will increasingly be used as general internet service providers (ISPs) for laptops and desktop computers. 5G coverage in Chautauqua County is minimal as of 2022, but is expected to expand by 2025.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Needs that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic helped to push the government to create programs to help pay for the high cost of internet access.
- Technology has transformed communication by making it easier than ever to communicate with each other. Schools and businesses around the county were forced to upgrade systems, and in certain cases provide technology to students and staff, that made ongoing learning and remote work possible during a difficult time.
- The internet, navigation devices, telemedicine, and streaming media are changing the ways we interact with the world, making us better informed and making our lives easier.

CHALLENGES

- Rural areas remain that lack adequate internet access and/or cell phone reception, limiting communication for residents in remote areas.
- Many people are not aware of best practices for cybersecurity or do not make an effort to follow them.
- Children and teens are particularly vulnerable to cyber bullying and online predators, underscoring the need for parental supervision and controls.
- Small brick and mortar retailers must find ways to compete with online shopping retailers and mega-stores.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to support infrastructure investments throughout the county for expanding internet access and quality.
- Support initiatives that encourage a better understanding of cybersecurity risks and best practices.
- Parents and educators should continue to monitor children's online activity and cell phone use and to educate them about potential dangers.
- Continue funding for programs that allow low income people and small businesses to have access to technology.



9. Public Safety

INTRODUCTION

Studies routinely demonstrate that a higher prevalence of poverty often leads to a higher prevalence of crime. While there are many factors that influence an area's crime rate, people in poverty are more likely to experience stress, have fewer educational and vocational opportunities, be more disconnected from their communities, and perceive a greater lack of opportunity than people who have higher incomes, all of which in turn affect crime rates.

Chautauqua County experiences many of the public safety concerns that rural areas across the country currently face, such as illegal drug activity. New York State has also been active in recent years in changing certain criminal justice laws, such as those related to marijuana or the treatment of juvenile offenders.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

According to 2021 crime data from the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, Chautauqua County has an index crime rate of 1997.5 per 100,000 population. Index crimes include murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault (which are classified as violent crimes), and the property crimes of burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft. The overall rate of index crimes has decreased in Chautauqua County from 2164.5 per 100,000 in 2017. In comparison, the rate of index crimes for NYS in 2021 was 1731.3 per 100,000, and for NYS discounting NY City the rate was 1381.1 per 100,000.

Adult arrest rates in Chautauqua County have remained steady since 2016. The majority of arrests are misdemeanors; from 2019-2021, misdemeanor arrests have accounted for 68% of all arrests while the remaining 32% were felonies. **Table 9.1** illustrates the numbers of arrests for adults aged 18 and older for the years 2016-2021.

Courts

Chautauqua County has a unified court system that ensures all courts in the county are centrally governed. There are 31 local courts in Chautauqua County. Chautauqua County is part of the Eighth Judicial district in New York State which includes the Supreme and

County Courts, Dunkirk City Court, Jamestown City Court, and Family Court. Town and Village courts handle traffic infractions and have criminal jurisdiction over violations and misdemeanors.

Four drug treatment courts exist in Chautauqua County as part of the NYS Judicial system, which offer an alternative for defendants struggling with addiction. Drug treatment courts allow for a reduced sentence or the dismissal of charges for defendants who successfully complete a drug treatment program. Drug treatment courts have been shown to be linked to lower recidivism rates. Drug treatment courts in Chautauqua County include two in Jamestown, one in Dunkirk, and the Chautauqua Family Court in Mayville.

Modeled on the state's drug treatment courts, mental health courts handle criminal cases where defendants are experiencing mental illness. These courts feature specially trained staff and resource coordination to meet the individual needs of the defendant. The goal of the mental health courts is to provide such offenders with support and structure in order to avoid further criminal behavior. Mental health courts are located in Jamestown and Dunkirk.

Starting in March of 2020 until the Spring of 2022, the court system was primarily virtual due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Jamestown City Court and Dunkirk City Court have resumed normal operations. Chautauqua Supreme and County courts, Chautauqua Surrogate's court, and Chautauqua Family Court are working under a hybrid model of both virtual and in-person operations as of December 2022.

Chautauqua County Jail

The Chautauqua County Jail holds both pre-sentence detainees who are awaiting court action and convicted inmates who are sentenced to jail for a specific period of time. The jail also holds NYS parole violators, county probation violators, and persons accused of civil crimes such as failure to pay child support.

The Chautauqua County Jail has a capacity of just over 300 persons. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, the Chautauqua County jail incarceration rate was 192 per 100,000 people in 2020, compared to an average of 101 per 100,000 people statewide. Chautauqua County has the 15th highest incarceration rate among all NYS

Table 9.1: Arrests in Chautauqua County, 2012 - 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total Arrests	3,378	3,324	3,264	3,262	3,269	3,424	3,377	3,599	3,360	3,537
Felony Total	891	835	899	889	907	1,023	1,001	1,081	1,084	1,109
Drug	179	175	202	180	197	256	156	208	114	126
Violent	205	175	161	189	154	201	196	210	247	231
DWI	101	86	78	90	83	72	74	58	57	57
Other	406	399	458	430	473	494	575	605	666	695
Misdemeanor Total	2,487	2,489	2,365	2,373	2,362	2,401	2,376	2,518	2,276	2,428
Drug	193	219	231	247	328	439	484	463	315	393
DWI	556	542	526	503	510	482	416	421	340	418
Property	657	692	692	739	684	657	659	690	747	623
Other	1,081	1,036	916	884	840	823	817	944	874	994

Source: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Adult Arrests 18 and Older: 2012-2021

counties.

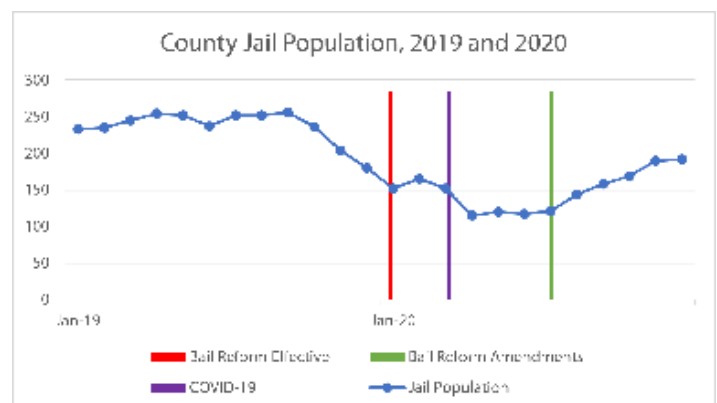
In January 2020, bail reform laws went into effect in NY State that eliminated cash bail for most misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies. Those who are accused of these nonviolent crimes are either freed without restrictions while their case is pending or released under conditions such as electronic monitoring. Those who oppose the new laws say that it is a threat to public safety. Proponents of bail reform contend that it was needed to preserve the tenet that people are innocent until proven guilty, in addition to addressing overcrowding in the jails. As seen in Chart 9.1, By February of 2020, the population at the Chautauqua County jail decreased 33% from the population one year prior. By June 2020, shortly after the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, the jail population decreased another 29%.

Effective July 2020 New York amended the bail reform law, expanding the limited circumstances in which judges may set bail. Jail populations then climbed across the state, and by December 2020 the average daily population in Chautauqua County jail had increased to 193, a 65% increase from the jail population in June and a 17% increase over the pre-pandemic population in February. By comparison, the statewide jail population increased 17% from June to December.

Since 2011, the Chautauqua County Jail has maintained a Re-entry Task Force in order to ensure a smooth transition from jail to the community upon an inmate’s release. The Task Force assesses barriers, needs, and gaps in services in order to reduce recidivism throughout the county. Re-entry programs include Ready, Set, Work, a job readiness training program; and Thinking

for a Change, a cognitive behavioral therapy group.

Efforts by reentry programs and services at the county jail have reduced the jail’s recidivism rate. In 2014, 35 percent of participants returned to jail, compared to the 60 percent in 2013. This was due to programs that focus on community referrals, job readiness, parenting courses and child support for low-income individuals with children and interview booking. In 2018, the Offender Workforce Development Partnership Training program started being offered to individuals who work with an inmate population.



Domestic Violence

According to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, there were a total of 960 domestic violence victims reported in 2021 in Chautauqua County, an increase of 9.7% over the 2017 total of 825 reported victims. **Table 9.3** illustrates the numbers of reported

victims of domestic violence throughout Chautauqua County in 2021 by the type of offense and the relationship between the parties.

Table 9.3: Reported Domestic Violence Victims

	VF	VM	VO	Total
Aggravated Assault	41	16	23	80
Simple Assault	455	93	199	747
Sex Offense	14	1	38	53
Violation of Protective Order	59	3	18	80
Total	569	113	278	960

VF = victim is female intimate partner

VM = victim is male intimate partner

VO = victim is other family

Source: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services Domestic Violence Victim Data by County:2021

While this data provides an unduplicated number of victims, the number of domestic violence incidents is most likely far greater due to repeat offenses between the same parties. For example, the 2021 Annual Report from the Jamestown Office of Public Safety indicates that City of Jamestown Police alone completed 1,976 domestic violence incident reports in 2020 and 2,083 in 2021. Also, it is known that many incidents of domestic violence go unreported and are therefore not reflected in the data.

Sex Offenders

According to The Division of Criminal Justice Services, as of September 2022, there are a total of 405 registered sex offenders in Chautauqua County: 171 at risk level 1, indicating low risk of repeat offense; 154 at risk level 2, indicating moderate risk of repeat offense; 72 at level 3, indicating high risk of repeat offense; and 8 at level P, for whom a risk level has not yet been determined. The Sex Offender Registry can be found here: https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp

Fire and Emergency Services

The Chautauqua County Office of Emergency Services supports 42 fire departments, both of the county's major firefighters' training centers, and law enforcement.

Most fire departments in the county operate with volunteers and rely on allocations and fundraising to pay for operations. In September 2022, the Chautauqua County Legislature approved a resolution allowing fire departments to charge patients up to \$250 for ambulance service.

In addition to fire departments and law enforcement, specialized teams assemble in the county based on the type of threat to be addressed or the service to be provided, which include: Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, Water Emergency, the Chautauqua Area Search Team, Critical Incident Stress Management, Fire Investigation, Fire Police, Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), and the Citizens Emergency Response Team.

A fly car response system was launched in 2017 to provide a fast response to emergency calls throughout the county. Fly cars do not transport patients, but they provide paramedics for basic and advanced life support. Fly cars operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week and are currently based in Mayville, Sheridan, Falconer, and Lakewood. According to a March 19, 2022 article in the Jamestown Post-Journal, fly cars responded to 5,576 calls in 2021. The fly car system also operates two ambulances – one based in Sheridan that is used by several volunteer fire departments, and another based in Celoron that is staffed with an Emergency Medical Technician.

Mercy Flight EMS provides both flights and ground ambulance services for medical transport. Based in Batavia, NY, they serve the Western NY area, including the



northern end of Chautauqua County. Mercy Flight is an independent, not-for-profit provider.

Homeland Security

Chautauqua County's northern border on Lake Erie is an international border between the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. Border Patrol is responsible for these 45-miles of border. Individuals entering the country by boat can register with U.S. Customs at facilities at the Dunkirk and Barcelona harbors.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

Mass/School Shootings

Mass shootings, which are defined as having at least four victims shot (not including the shooter), have increased over the last several years on state and national levels. According to Gun Violence Archive, 622 mass shooting incidents have occurred nationwide in 2022 through December 6, compared to 348 in the year 2017. In NY State there have been 28 mass shootings in 2022 to date, compared to 13 for all of 2017. NYS shootings in 2022 caused 21 deaths and 118 injured victims. On May 14, 2022, a mass shooting at a Buffalo, NY Tops supermarket resulted in 10 fatalities.

New York State enacted stricter permitting and minimum age requirements for semi-automatic rifles in the wake of the increase in mass shootings, but the new legislation is currently being challenged in court. According to COI's 2022 survey of the community (Appendix I), 55.95% of respondents said that sales of assault weapons should be banned to anyone outside the military. 27.38% said there should be an age limit on sales of assault weapons, and 16.67% said they should not be banned from sale (no change from the current system).

Raise the Age

In April 2017, NY State passed "Raise the Age" legislation that changed how the state handles arrests for 16- and 17-year-old juveniles. As of Oct. 1, 2019, parents of 16- and 17-year-olds who are arrested must be notified and involved in any questioning of their child. Other changes include the trying of most cases in Family Court or "Youth Parts" of adult courts, a ban on sentencing and detaining juveniles in facilities that hold adults, and an opportunity for conviction records to become sealed after ten years for eligible nonviolent offenses.

Marijuana

In New York State, lawmakers legalized marijuana as of March 2021. It is now legal for adults 21 and older to possess up to three ounces of cannabis and up to 24 grams of concentrated cannabis for personal use in New York. Residents may grow up to six cannabis plants (12 per household) for personal use. Municipalities were allowed to "opt out" of allowing marijuana dispensaries to operate in their jurisdictions. According to Rockefeller Institute of Government, 32 of 42 municipalities in Chautauqua County opted out as of the end of 2021.



Neighborhood Watch and Nextdoor

Neighborhood Watch is based on a concept of cooperation; when citizens take positive steps to secure their own property and neighbors learn how to report suspicious activity around their homes, burglary and related offenses decrease dramatically. The Cities of Dunkirk and Jamestown, as well as several townships in the county, sponsor Neighborhood Watch programs.

The Cities of Dunkirk and Jamestown, as well as several other municipalities in Chautauqua County, use the private social network Nextdoor, in which community members can report issues of concern in their neighborhoods and stay connected to law enforcement and other residents. Residents may download an app to their phones where they use their real names and addresses to establish a digital version of their physical neighborhood.

The City of Jamestown has an official Neighborhood Watch group that is associated with its police department. Individuals interested in applying for membership are required to complete an application involving a petition with neighbors' signatures. The Neighborhood Watch Coalition, a collective of

representatives from 30 different watch groups in the city, meets monthly. Coalition members have joined with police officers and other volunteers to paint over graffiti in the city, distribute toys for children that have been victims or witnesses of violence, the National Night Out program, the “Race Against Racism,” food drives, recycling awareness campaigns, and more. A Facebook group for Jamestown Neighborhood Watch has 114 members.

Criminal Justice Education

The Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES has developed a Criminal Justice and Crime Scene Investigation Forensics course designed for youth interested in criminal justice and law enforcement related careers. The course teaches students about basic criminal justice systems, fire protection, firearm safety and use, first aid and more. Criminal justice programs are also offered at SUNY Fredonia and Jamestown Community College.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

COI’s 2022 survey of the community (Appendix I) found that 66.27% of those responding either disagree or strongly disagree with the bail reform laws.

In COI’s 2022 community survey (Appendix I), respondents were asked, “Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?”. A total of 83.75% said “yes”, while 16.27% of the participants said “no”. Compared to COI’s 2020 Community Needs Assessment survey results of the same question, there is an 8% increase in those who do not feel safe.

Respondents to the same survey were asked about the adequacy of emergency services in their community. Those responding that services are either “Excellent” or “Adequate” total 63.35% (Police services); 80.15% (Fire Department services); and 68.93% (Emergency Medical Technician services). The remainder of respondents in each category said that services could be improved.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Dunkirk, Jamestown and several county townships use the private social media network Nextdoor, where residents can stay connected and report issues
- The Chautauqua County jail has a re-entry task force aimed at creating a smooth transition from jail to the community. A program called Ready, Set, Work is in place to help prepare for job readiness

upon release.

- Three emergency fly cars operate in Chautauqua County. They are able to bring equipment similar to an emergency room’s equipment to the scene of an accident.

CHALLENGES

- In 2021, there were a total of 960 domestic violence victims reported in Chautauqua County, an increase of 9.7% from 2017.
- Gun violence is on the rise with 622 mass shootings nationwide in 2022, compared to 348 in 2017. There have been 28 mass shootings in NYS in 2022, compared to 13 in 2017.
- Due to overcrowding in the county jails and state prisons, NYS enacted a bail reform policy which allows non-violent offenders to be released on bail while awaiting a court date, despite opposition from a large segment of the public.
- Although the crime rate has decreased in recent years in Chautauqua County, the rate of crime is significantly higher than the NY State average.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to take measures against poverty in order to reduce crime rates in Chautauqua County.
- Additional Neighborhood Watch programs could help reinforce public safety throughout the county.
- Expand outreach and prevention programs that deter substance abuse and prevent recidivism.
- Support new gun legislation to decrease the number of assault weapons on the streets.

10. Volunteerism

INTRODUCTION

Many organizations depend on volunteers to provide necessary services in their community while helping to save on costs. A report by the Urban Institute found that, in addition to these benefits, volunteers may possess specialized skills that are a tremendous asset to their agency and the people they serve. The report also found that volunteers can increase public support for an organization's programs, improve community relations, and increase the quality of services.

Volunteerism can strengthen a company's workforce by helping to instill company values in employees, attracting and retaining workers, generating team building between employees, and improving the company's image. Many workers are motivated by the opportunity to give back, so giving them opportunities to volunteer makes a positive impact for the organization as a whole.

Along those lines, volunteerism has a noticeable effect on our individual attitudes. Plenty of evidence exists suggesting that volunteerism increases our happiness, which can in turn promote productivity in the workplace and other positive net effects. Volunteerism can also provide opportunities for professional development, since it can help to reinforce problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork skills.

Other positive results may include giving your organization the ability to do more work, reducing the burden on paid staff, giving your organization a larger and more diverse membership, allowing for persons outside your organization to better understand your work, and maximizing what you can accomplish within your budget.

Animals

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Chautauqua County Humane Society	Jamestown	665-2209	www.spcapets.com
Lakeshore Humane Society	Dunkirk	672-1991	www.lakeshorehumanesociety.org
Northern Chautauqua Canine Rescue	Westfield	326-7297	www.caninerescue.org
Westfield Stray Cat Rescue	Westfield	326-2404	www.facebook.com/westfieldstraycatrescue

The Benefits of Volunteering for Individuals

Volunteers may be devoting their time toward helping others, but their service has the potential to be rewarding for themselves. Among other benefits, volunteers often meet new people and gain connections, acquire a better understanding of their community's needs, obtain an understanding of the service organizations in their community, become more invested in their community, set an example for others in their lives, and gain new experiences for future employment.



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Chautauqua County has many opportunities for those looking to volunteer their time for an organization or a cause. The following list is organized by cause and is not exhaustive. Phone numbers and web addresses are accurate as of 2022; however, it is possible that a phone number or address may change after this date. All area codes are (716) unless noted otherwise.

Additional volunteer opportunities may be found at www.211wny.org.

Arts

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
1891 Fredonia Opera House	Fredonia	679-1891	www.fredopera.org
Infinity Performing Arts Center	Jamestown	664-0991	www.infinityperformingarts.org
Lucille Ball Little Theater	Jamestown	483-1095	www.lucilleballlittletheatre.org
The National Comedy Center	Jamestown	484-2222 ext. 100	www.comedycenter.org/getorganized

Children and Youth

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Allegheny Highlands Boy Scouts Council	Falconer	665-2697	www.alleghenyhighlands.org
Boys & Girls Clubs	Dunkirk	366-1061	www.bgcofncc.org
	Jamestown	664-2902	www.bgcjamestown.org
Campus & Community Children's Center	Fredonia	673-4662	www.fredonia.edu/about/offices/campus-and-community-childrens-center
CASA of Chautauqua County (Court Appointed Special Advocates)	Jamestown	753-4132	www.chautauquacasa.com
Centaur Stride	Westfield	326-4318	www.centaurstride.org
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.	Dunkirk/ Jamestown	366-3333	www.chautauquaopportunities.com
Chautauqua County Child Advocacy Program	Jamestown	338-9844	www.capjustice.org
Chautauqua Lake Child Care	Mayville	753-5851	www.clccc.org
Chautauqua Striders	Jamestown	488-2203	www.chqstriders.org
Foster Grandparent Program	Jamestown	665-5354	www.lutheran-jamestown.org/foster-grandparent-volunteer-program
Girl Scouts of Western NY	Jamestown	935-6040	www.gswny.org

Community

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
American Red Cross	Dunkirk	366-4033	www.redcross.org
	Jamestown	800-733-2767	www.redcross.org/ny/jamestown
Chautauqua Area Habitat for Humanity	Mayville	269-7772	www.chqhhabitat.org/
Chautauqua County Rural Ministry	Dunkirk	366-1787	www.theccrm.org

Community (continued)

Chautauqua Safety Village	Ashville	338-0171	www.chautauquasafetyvillage.com
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.	Dunkirk/ Jamestown	366-3333	www.chautauquaopportunities.com
Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy	Jamestown	664-2166	www.chautauquawatershed.org
Community Helping Hands	Jamestown	487-1488	www.chhny.org
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Jamestown	664-9502	www.cce.cornell.edu
Compeer Chautauqua	Dunkirk	366-3161	www.chqcompeer.com/
Dunkirk Free Library	Dunkirk	366-2511	www.dunkirklibrary.org
Dunkirk-Fredonia Meals on Wheels	Dunkirk	366-8822	www.dfmealsonwheels.org/
Recovery Options Made Easy	Jamestown	661-3845	www.recoveryoptionsny.org/
James Prendergast Library	Jamestown	484-7135	www.prendergastlibrary.org
Jamestown Renaissance Corporation	Jamestown	661-2477	www.jamestownrenaissance.org
Learning Disabilities Association of WNY	Fredonia	679-1601	www.beyondwny.org/
Literacy Volunteers of Chautauqua County	Dunkirk	366-4438	www.lvccread.org
Meals on Wheels Jamestown	Jamestown	488-9119	www.jmstmow.com/
Patterson Library	Westfield	326-2154	www.pattersonlibrary.info
The Resource Center	Jamestown	483-2344	www.resourcecenter.org/support-trc/volunteer-program/
Robert H. Jackson Center	Jamestown	483-6646	www.roberthjackson.org
Salvation Army	Dunkirk/ Jamestown	664-4108	www.easternusa.salvationarmy.org/empire/jamestown/
Southern Tier Environments for Living	Dunkirk	366-3200	www.stel.org
St. Susan Center	Jamestown	664-2253	www.stsusancenter.org
Veterans Administration Clinic	Dunkirk	862-8671	www.va.gov/western-new-york-health-care/
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance	Dunkirk	366-6597	www.unitedwayncc.org
	Jamestown	483-1561	www.uwayscc.org/vita
YWCA of Westfield	Westfield	326-4012	www.ywcawestfield.org
YWCA of Jamestown	Jamestown	664-2802	www.ywcaofjamestown.com

Health/Wellness

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Brooks Memorial Hospital	Dunkirk	366-1111	www.brookshospital.org
Chautauqua Blind Association	Jamestown	664-6660	www.chautauquablind.org
Chautauqua Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Council	Dunkirk	366-4623	www.preventionworks.us/
Hospice Chautauqua County	Lakewood	753-5383	www.chpc.care/
Southern Tier Kidney Association	Jamestown	664-8226	www.southerntierkidneyassoc.org
UPMC Hospital	Jamestown	664-8423	www.upmc.com/locations/hospitals/chautauqua/about/volunteer
Westfield Memorial Hospital	Westfield	326-4921	www.ahn.org

History

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Dunkirk Historical Society and Museum	Dunkirk	366-3797	www.dunkirkhistoricalmuseum.org
Fenton History Center	Jamestown	664-6526	www.fentonhistorycenter.org

Sports and Recreation

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Allegany State Park	Salamanca	253-1209	www.friendsofallegany.com
Camp Gross	Cassadaga	595-2171	www.campgross.org
Chautauqua County Fair Association	Dunkirk	366-4752	www.chautauquacountyfair.org
Chautauqua Rails to Trails	Mayville		www.chaurtt.org
Chautauqua County Sports Hall of Fame	Jamestown	484-2272	www.chautauquasportshalloffame.org
Jamestown Audubon Society	Jamestown	569-2345	www.auduboncnc.org
Jamestown Lakers Youth Hockey Association	Jamestown	484-7825	www.jamestownlakers.com
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation	Statewide	372-0645	www.dec.ny.gov

Seniors

Organization	Location	Phone	Web Address
Chautauqua Adult Day Care	Jamestown	665-4899	www.seniordayprograms.com

Seniors (continued)

Chautauqua County RSVP	Jamestown	665-3038	www.lutheran-jamestown.org/rsvp-and-foster-grandparents
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.	Dunkirk/ Jamestown	366-3333	www.chautauquaopportunities.com
Friends of WCA Home	Fredonia	672-7961	www.wcahome.org
Heritage Ministries Rehab/ Retirement/Senior Living	Gerry	487-6800	www.heritage1886.org
Lutheran Social Services	Jamestown	665-8090	www.lutheran-jamestown.org

Addendum: Head Start

INTRODUCTION

Head Start is a federally funded program that was established in 1965 to prepare America's most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs support children's growth and development in a positive learning environment through a variety of services, which include:

- **Early learning:** Children's readiness for school and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Through relationships with adults, play, and planned and spontaneous instruction, children grow in many aspects of development. Children progress in social skills and emotional well-being, along with language and literacy learning, and concept development.
- **Health:** Each child's perceptual, motor, and physical development is supported to permit them to fully explore and function in their environment. All children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services to ensure that children are receiving the services they need.
- **Family well-being:** Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) is the provider of Head Start services (ages three to five) for all of Chautauqua County. A separate program operated by Agri-Business Child Development provides Head Start services for 96 funded slots currently serving 56 children of migrant workers. COI has been providing these services since 1965. COI began providing Early Head Start services (ages birth to three and pregnant women) in 1995. In 2015, under the federal government's Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership initiative, COI was able to expand its services by collaborating with a local child care provider to double the number of children served

through Early Head Start in Chautauqua County. Today, COI can serve 522 children annually, which includes 360 in Head Start and 160 children and 2 pregnant women in Early Head Start.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STATISTICS

The following table uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey to illustrate the number of children in Chautauqua County who are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services.

Characteristics of Children Under 5, Chautauqua County

Total Population		127,657
Children under 5 years of age	6,968	5.3%
Living in poverty	1,933	28.3%
Race and Hispanic Origin:		
White	5,838	83.8%
Black or African American	281	4.0%
American Indian	7	0.1%
Asian	42	0.6%
Native Hawaiian	0	0.0%
Some other race	293	4.2%
Two or more races	507	7.3%
Hispanic or Latino	1,069	15.3%
White, non-Hispanic or Latino	5,287	75.9%

Source: www.data.census.gov

According to this data, 1,933 children are potentially eligible for HS or EHS services, based on the 28.3% rate of poverty for families with related children under the age of 5. This is a conservative estimate, as children are also automatically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services if they are experiencing homelessness, in foster care or a household member receives SSI or SNAP.

This would indicate that COI is currently only serving 27% of eligible children. COI maintains an active waitlist for its services and averages approximately 45 children waiting for services each month.

The following data for calendar year 2021 was generated from the Chautauqua County Homeless Management Information System:

- 1047 people were homeless in 2021 in Chautauqua

County.

- 63 of the homeless individuals were under the age of 5.

According to the NYS Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse, 104 Chautauqua County children under the age of 21 were in foster care in 2020 and 115 were in care in 2019. A conservative estimate of children automatically qualifying for Head Start or Early Head Start services is 100 children per year.

Other Early Education Programming

Numbers of child care slots in Chautauqua County are listed below by the type of provider, as reported by the Chautauqua Child Care Council in September 2022.

Child Care Slots in Chautauqua County

2022 Licensed/Registered Providers	Number of Facilities	Number of Slots
Day Care Centers (DCC)	22	1,656
Family Day Care (FDC)	27	214
Group Family Day Care (GFDC)	15	240

Source: Chautauqua Child Care Council

Six of the 22 Day Care Centers and 32% of the slots are Head Start or Early Head Start slots. In addition, a seventh Day Care Center is an Early Head Start – Child Care Partner. Chautauqua County is considered a child care desert by the Center for American Progress, defined as an area with an insufficient supply of licensed child care.

New York State Education Department School Report Card data for the 2020-2021 school year indicate a county-wide pre-kindergarten enrollment of 896 three and four year old students across the 18 Chautauqua County school districts. The 2020 U.S. census counted 2,711 three- and four-year-olds in the county, indicating that just over a third of all children ages 3 or 4 (33%) are enrolled in a formal early education program. The 2020 census represents a decrease of 430 children ages 3 or 4 in Chautauqua County.

TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS

Head Start has a Performance Standard that states "A program must ensure at least 10 percent of its

total funded enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act], unless the responsible HHS official grants a waiver." (Part 1302.14). Most children with disabilities under the age of 5 are not given specific diagnoses. However in a typical year, the range of support services includes speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and supports for the vision and hearing impaired. Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. has consistently met this standard without requesting a waiver. In COI's 2022-2023 program year, 13% of enrolled students have an identified disability.

COI's center based services are located in the main population centers of Chautauqua County: Jamestown and Dunkirk. The agency is currently working towards full enrollment as the COVID pandemic recedes. The largest barrier to full enrollment is the worker shortage brought on by the pandemic. Throughout 2022, the program has consistently had more than 35 positions vacant at any one time, with a high of 50 open positions. While staff vacancies have persisted throughout the local economy, Head Start services have been severely affected, largely due to an inability to match wages paid by school districts for teachers and other educational professionals, as well as wages paid by retail, commercial, and industrial sectors for entry level employees.

The Administration for Children and Families (federal agency responsible for Head Start) issued a memo on September 12, 2022 titled, *Strategies to Stabilize the Head Start Work Force*, which provided the following guidance:

"The credentials and qualifications of Head Start staff have significantly increased over the past decade, while their compensation has been persistently low. Stagnant wages and lack of comprehensive benefits and wellness supports make it difficult to recruit and retain staff, which contributes to classroom closures and high caseloads for current staff. A well-compensated and supported workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to promote children's optimal development and family well-being. The Office of Head Start (OHS) draws upon the legacy of Head Start leadership in the early childhood field to encourage programs to appropriately compensate and support their staff.

Head Start staff are deeply committed to the mission of the program and are highly qualified professionals. OHS encourages programs to look holistically at their organizational structure and identify sustainable ways to support and compensate staff accordingly. As needed, OHS encourages grant recipients to consider restructuring their programs as a sustainable mechanism for providing

increased compensation and other necessary supports to staff. This requires a balance of effectively providing high-quality, comprehensive services to the highest need children and families while improving staff compensation and supports. This may include consolidating grants, restructuring management or organizations, or requesting a reduction in the overall number of funded slots while continuing to prioritize services to the children and families who are most in need."

COI, at the direction of its Board of Directors and with the guidance of its Policy Council, will be undertaking a such a review of its services and will make recommendations within the next year.

To support COI's workforce, any COI employees who earn their Child Development Associate credential (paid for through COI) receive 11 credits towards their Associates degree in Early Childhood Education through COI's partnership with Jamestown Community College. COI has also aligned its pay scale for teachers and teacher assistants to provide raises when an employee earns an additional credential, degree, or NY State teaching certificate.

Enrollment in Head Start services has also been affected by the continued increases in the NY State minimum wage that began in 2016. Increases in minimum wage have reduced the number of families under 100% of the federal poverty guidelines. In recognition that the federal poverty guideline does not account for all aspects of poverty, a large number of federally funded anti-poverty programs have income limits at 200% of poverty. In March 2022, the Department of Health and Human Services submitted a report to Congress illustrating how the increase to minimum wage is impacting eligibility for Head Start. They included the following scenarios to demonstrate how families' eligibility is being impacted. One scenario describes that a single parent with two children working a full-time job at minimum wage above \$11.00/hr would earn \$22,550 per year. This income places the family above the 100% poverty guidelines. In another scenario, two parents working full time at \$15.00/hr would only meet the eligibility requirements for Head Start if they had twelve children.

Head Start eligibility is limited to those under 100% of poverty and can only be expanded to 130% if there are no families under 100% of poverty on the waiting list. COI has expanded eligibility to 130% of poverty.

COI has partnered with local school districts to collaborate on pre-kindergarten programs, combining resources to serve more children, while at the same time improving the quality of programming. The agency

currently has pre-kindergarten partnerships with the Brocton, Dunkirk, and Jamestown School Districts.

To support quality programming, COI also fully participates in New York State's QualityStars program – a rating and technical assistance program for licensed and registered child care providers. Each of COI's centers that has received an initial rating has earned 4 out five stars under the program.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- The number of children served by Head Start and Early Head Start has consistently increased since the initial onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COI maintains strong partnerships within the community to expand the availability of the program and make the best use of available resources.

CHALLENGES

- Chautauqua County is designated as a child care desert that lacks sufficient licensed child care, particularly outside the City of Jamestown.
- A workforce shortage in the Early Childhood field is preventing the agency from serving all eligible children and families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand geographical reach of Head Start services by partnering with local pre-kindergarten programs whenever possible to maximize the number of children served, provide programming in local communities and allow for the enrollment of children from economically diverse backgrounds.
- Become the employer of choice in early childhood education with a progressive wage and benefit package that attracts and retains a quality workforce.
- Raise the federal eligibility guidelines to 200% of poverty, in line with CSBG and other anti-poverty federal programs.

Appendix I: Community Needs Survey

INTRODUCTION

The following data was collected via an online survey that was open from August 8, 2022 through September 12, 2022. A link to the survey was distributed through COI's website, social media, posters and flyers to gather information about the needs of Chautauqua County residents, as well as their perceptions about available resources.

RESULTS

Do you have access to fresh fruits and vegetables?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	95.49%	254
No	4.51%	12

How many servings of fruits and/or vegetables do you eat in a typical day?

	Percentage	Number
None	6.39%	17
1 or 2 servings	59.40%	158
3 or 4 servings	28.20%	75
5 servings	4.51%	12
More than 5 servings	1.50%	4

If you or a member of your household has experienced a mental health crisis, were you able to access adequate mental health services in Chautauqua County to meet your needs?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	29.01%	76
No	17.18%	45
Not applicable	53.82%	141

Have you ever missed a medical appointment due to a lack of transportation?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	15.04%	40
No	84.96%	226

Have you or a member of your household struggled with any of the following types of addiction? (Check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
Alcohol	19.92%	53
Nicotine	24.81%	66
Opioids	7.14%	19
Other drugs	10.53%	28
Gambling	4.14%	11
None	62.41%	166

Other addictions noted included meth, cannabis, cocaine, shopping, video games, kratom, and speed.

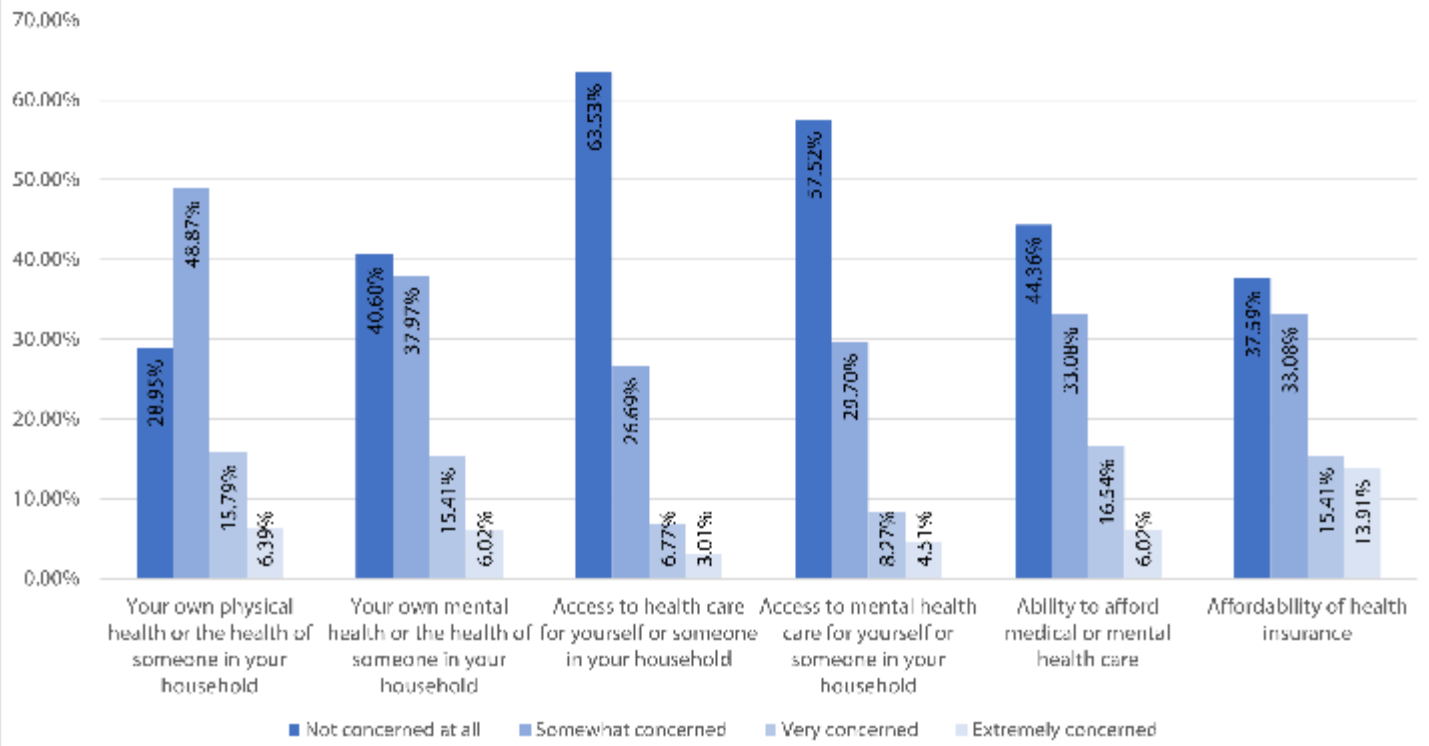
In the past 12 months, have you or a member of your household needed but could not get (check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
Medical care	12.03%	32
Mental health services	12.78%	34
Prescription medications	13.91%	37
I have been able to get all of these that I needed.	76.69%	204

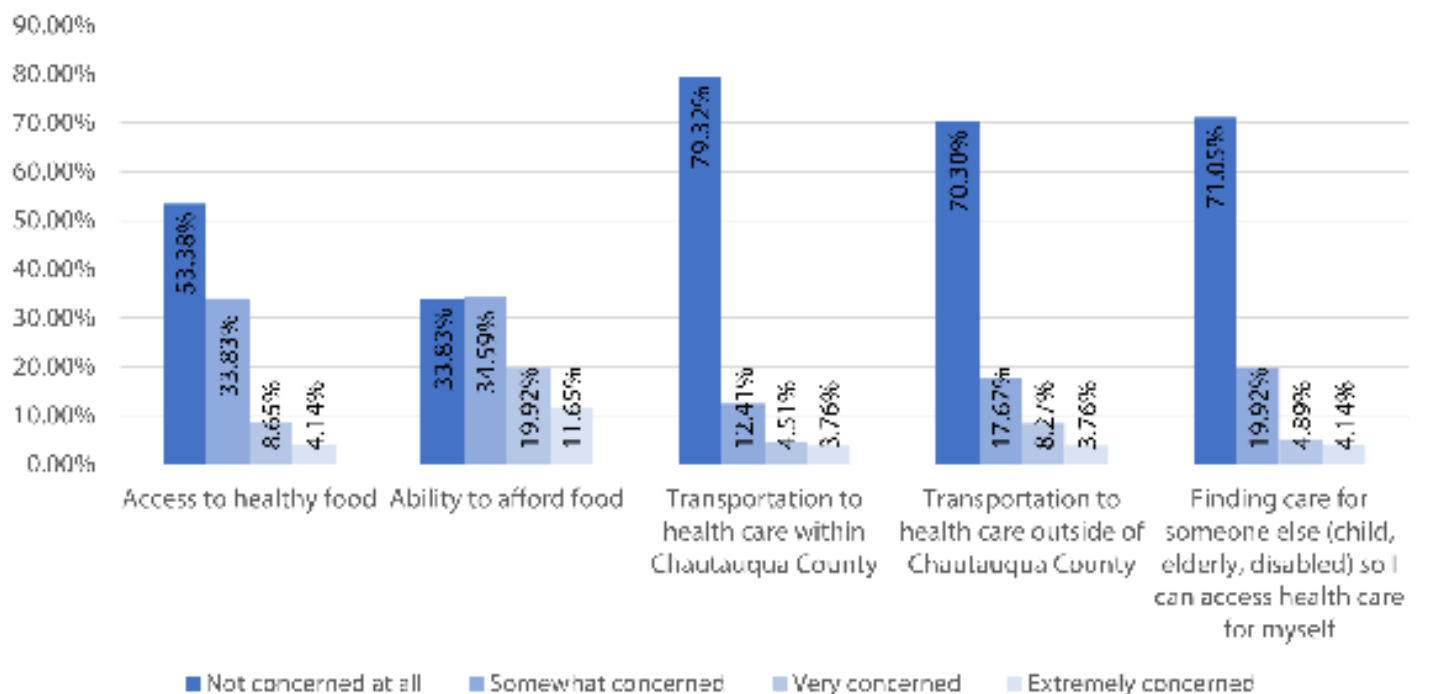
If you are the primary caregiver for an elderly or disabled person, do you have access to supportive resources (respite, community support, education)?

	Percentage	Number
Yes, I have access to supportive services for caregivers of the elderly or disabled.	8.27%	22
No, I do not have access to supportive services for caregivers of the elderly or disabled.	11.28%	30
Not applicable - I am not a caregiver for an elderly or disabled person.	80.45%	214

Please rate your level of concern with the following issues related to health:



Please rate your level of concern with the following issues:



Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	83.73%	211
No	16.27%	41

How has your travel changed since gas prices started going up? (Check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
I do not have my own transportation	2.38%	6
I decreased the amount that I travel or canceled a long trip	48.02%	121
I travel the same amount as I always have, but pay more for gas	41.27%	104
I carpool more frequently with someone else	4.76%	12
I use public transportation or ride sharing more frequently	0.40%	1
I have other bills that were late or unpaid because I need gas to get to work	21.83%	55

Has the high cost of gasoline influenced you to consider switching to an electric vehicle?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	21.43%	54
No	76.19%	192
Not applicable/ I do not own a vehicle	2.38%	6

Do you think assault weapons should be banned from sale to the general public?

	Percentage	Number
Yes, they should be banned from sale to anyone outside of the military	55.95%	141
There should be an age limit on sales of assault weapons	27.38%	69
No, they should not be banned from sale (no change)	16.67%	42

Are the following emergency services adequate in your community?

	Services could be improved	Services are adequate	Services are excellent
Police	36.65%	46.22%	17.13%
Fire Department	19.84%	45.63%	34.52%
Emergency Medical Technician	31.08%	45.82%	23.11%

The New York State Legislature recently passed bail reform laws eliminating money bail and pre-trial detention in nearly all misdemeanor and non-violent felony cases. Do you agree with the changes to bail reform laws?

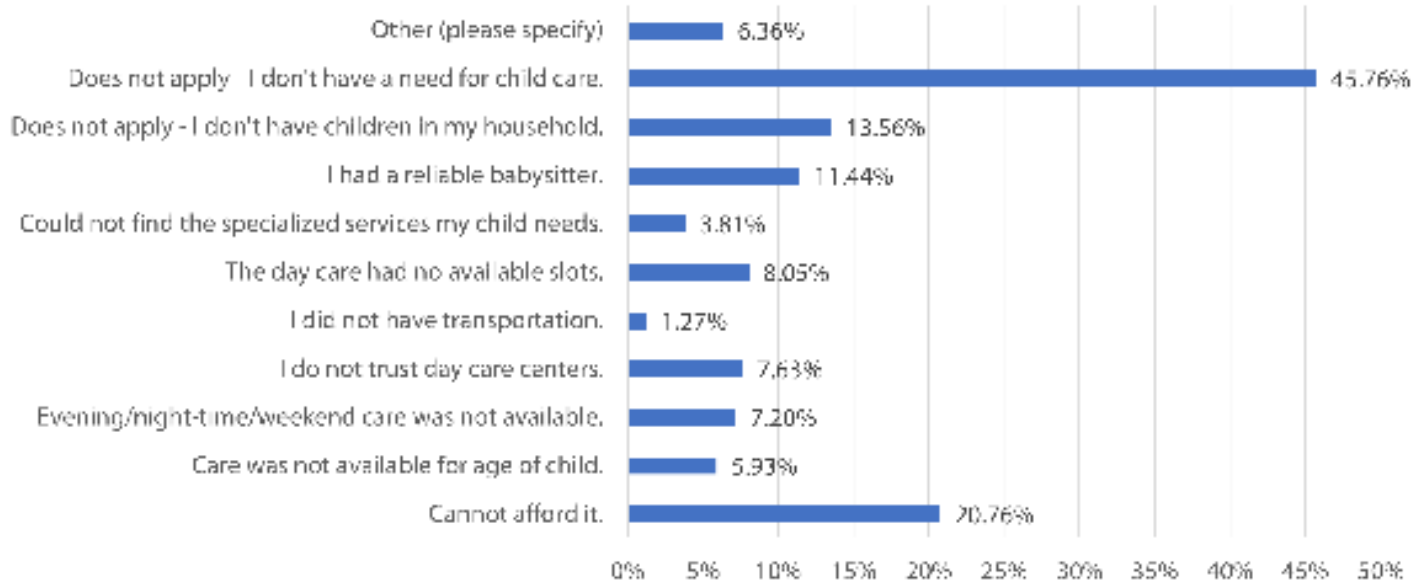
	Percentage	Number
Strongly disagree	41.27%	104
Disagree	25.00%	63
Neither agree nor disagree	22.22%	56
Agree	9.92%	25
Strongly agree	1.59%	4

If you sought Public Assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic, what type of Public Assistance help did you seek? (Check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
Not applicable - I did not seek Public Assistance	60.40%	151
SNAP Benefits (food stamps)	31.60%	79
Utility Assistance (HEAP or other assistance)	25.60%	64
Cash Assistance from the County Department of Social Services	6.40%	16
Temporary Housing Assistance from the County Department of Social Services	2.00%	5
Other (please specify)	5.60%	14

Other types of Public Assistance noted include unemployment, food banks and giveaways, rent assistance, and internet assistance.

If you have never used a day care center or registered provider, why not? (Check all that apply)



Other answers include location (near home and workplace), adjusted schedule to allow time to care for children, and uncertainty that child with a disability would have the proper care at a center.

Have any of the following been an issue for concern for any of the youth (under 18) in your household in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
Alcohol abuse	1.60%	4
Bullying	19.20%	48
Criminal activity	0.80%	2
Drug abuse	1.20%	3
Eating disorders	4.80%	12
Emotional or behavioral problems	22.80%	57
Gang membership	0.00%	0
Running away from home	0.80%	2
Sexual activity	2.40%	6
Skipping school or dropping out of school	2.00%	5
Smoking	4.40%	11
Teenage pregnancy	0.80%	2
Violent behavior	2.00%	5
None of the above	31.20%	78
No children in household	37.60%	94

What is most important to you when searching for a child care provider? (Check up to three)

	Percentage	Number
Experience/ Qualifications of the provider	62.60%	154
Location close to work or home	26.42%	65
Cost	51.63%	127
Provider is licensed/registered	22.76%	56
Ages or number of other children provider cares for	9.35%	23
Healthy foods provided	7.32%	18
Cleanliness of facility or provider home	31.30%	77
Language spoken	2.44%	6
Experience with (or accommodations for) special needs child	8.94%	22
Non-traditional hours (evenings/weekends)	8.94%	22
Personally knowing the provider	11.38%	28
Other (please specify)	10.57%	26

Other answers include good references, availability, and accessibility.

If you have had to search for childcare in the last 12 months, how would you describe the experience?

	Percentage	Number
Easy to find care that meets my needs	2.45%	6
Somewhat difficult to find care that meets my needs	10.20%	25
Extremely difficult to find care that meets my needs	20.41%	50
Not applicable	66.94%	164

What is the form of child care you currently use? (Check all that apply)

	Percentage	Number
Day care center	2.87%	7
Head Start/ Early Head Start/ UPK	4.51%	11
Registered, licensed day care provider	3.69%	9
After school program	3.28%	8
Informal/ unregistered provider (family, friend, babysitter)	16.80%	41
Legally exempt provider receiving subsidies for care	1.64%	4
Children are old enough to be alone	8.61%	21
Parent is home caring for children/ does not work	11.07%	27
Adults stagger their work hours so one can provide child care	5.33%	13
Does not apply	52.05%	127
Other (please specify)	5.74%	14

Other forms of childcare noted include school, work from home, summer camp, and accompanying parent at work.

What type of phone do you primarily use?

	Percentage	Number
Smartphone	91.35%	243
Cell phone that's not a smartphone	5.64%	15
Landline	3.01%	8

In general, what do you think are the most common barriers to obtaining or maintaining full-time employment for people in your community? (Choose up to 3)

	Percentage	Number
Child care	60.42%	145
Transportation	52.08%	125
Lack of education or specialized skills	37.92%	91
Lack of full-time job opportunities	28.33%	68
Inability to pass drug screening	27.08%	65
Lack of experience	18.75%	45
Other (please specify)	13.33%	32
Inability to pass background check	10.83%	26
Language	7.08%	17

Other barriers noted include low pay rates, lack of motivation, disabilities, lack of work ethic, lack of education, lack of social skills, and over qualification.

What is your primary method of watching television?

	Percentage	Number
Cable TV (i.e. Spectrum)	24.4%	65
Satellite (DirectTV, Dish)	7.14%	19
Streaming services (Netflix, Hulu, etc.)	59.02%	157
Mobile device/laptop/computer	3.01%	8
I don't watch TV	6.39%	17

Do you have access to broadband internet?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	87.59%	233
No	12.41%	33

If you have broadband internet, do you have enough bandwidth to meet your streaming needs?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	68.8%	183
No	10.90%	29
Don't know	10.53%	28
Don't use broadband	9.77%	26

What do you think are the primary challenges for people wanting to establish a business in Chautauqua County?

	Percentage	Number
Lack of available financing	54.17%	130
Inability to obtain credit/ Poor credit score	43.33%	104
Lack of experience	20.83%	50
Lack of business training	40.83%	98
High taxes/fees	62.92%	151
Other (please specify)	8.75%	21

Other challenges noted include lack of start up assistance, logistical barriers, poor economy, lack of community support, state regulations, and lack of work force.

Does your current household income meet your basic needs?

	Percentage	Number
Yes	62.50%	150
No	37.50%	90

What is your annual household income?

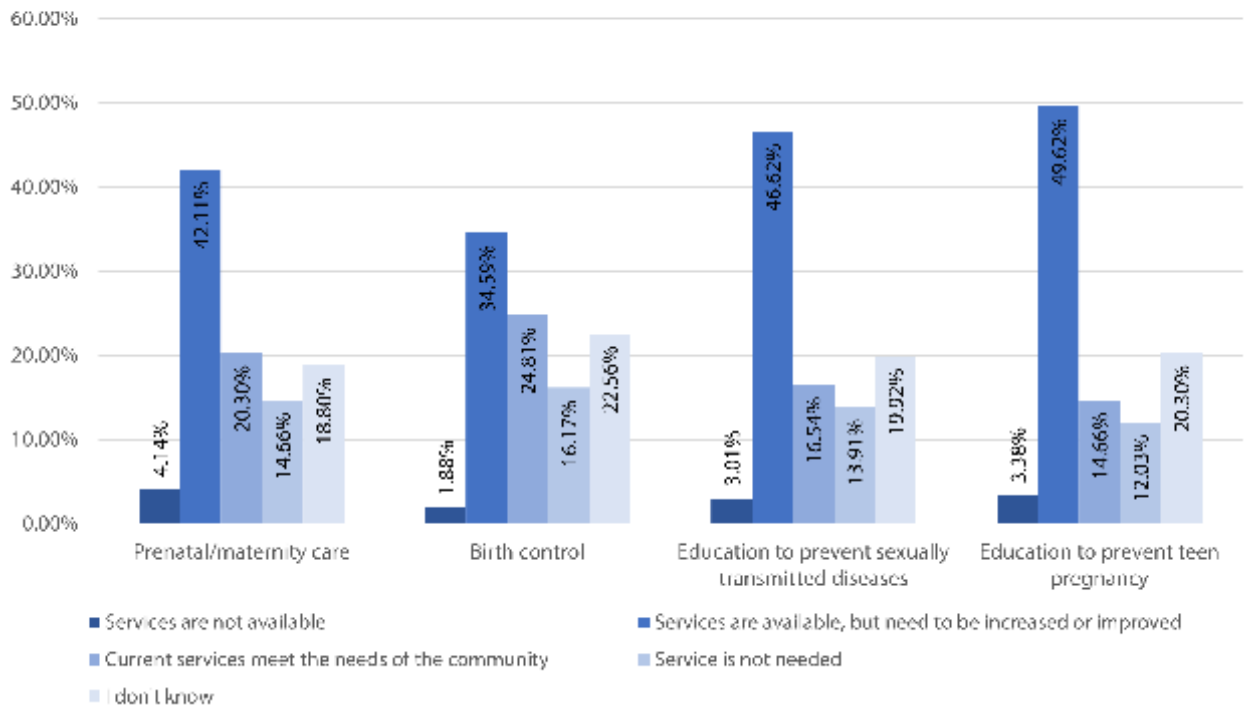
	Percentage	Number
Under \$10,000	6.87%	16
Between \$10,000 and \$19,999	7.73%	18
Between \$20,000 and \$29,999	11.16%	26
Between \$30,000 and \$39,999	12.88%	30
Between \$40,000 and \$49,999	12.45%	29
Between \$50,000 and \$59,999	12.45%	29
Between \$60,000 and \$69,999	9.44%	22
Between \$70,000 and \$79,999	7.30%	17
Between \$80,000 and \$99,999	12.02%	28
\$100,000 or more	7.73%	18

What is your zip code?

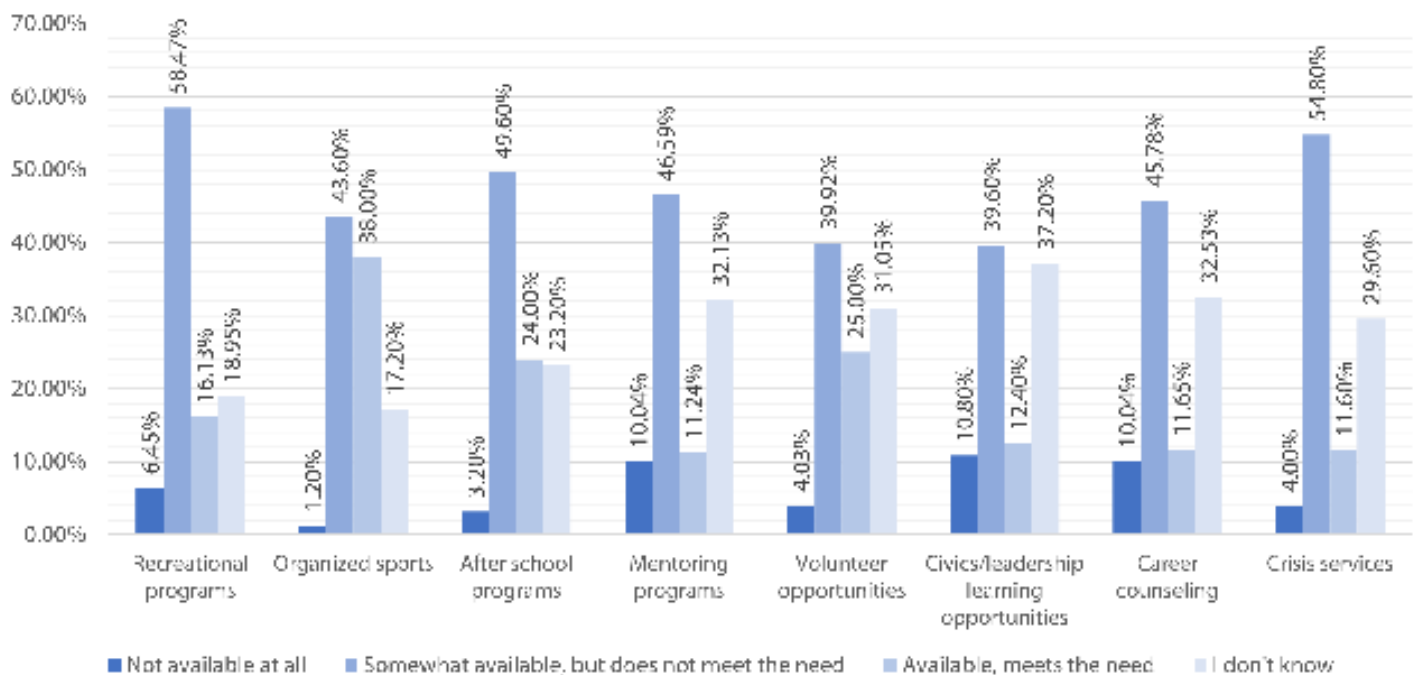
	Percentage	Number
14701 Jamestown	32.77%	77
14048 Dunkirk	15.74%	37
14710 Ashville	1.70%	4
14712 Bemus Point	2.13%	5
14716 Brocton	0.85%	2
14718 Cassadaga	2.55%	6
14720 Celeron	0.00%	0
14723 Cherry Creek	0.85%	2
14724 Clymer	0.00%	0
14728 Dewittville	1.70%	4
14732 Ellington	0.00%	0
14733 Falconer	2.98%	7
14736 Findley Lake	0.00%	0
14062 Forestville	2.55%	6
14063 Fredonia	14.04%	33
14738 Frewsburg	0.85%	2
14740 Gerry	0.43%	1
14081 Irving	0.00%	0
14747 Kennedy	1.70%	4
14750 Lakewood	3.40%	8
14752 Lily Dale	0.00%	0
14757 Mayville	0.85%	2
14767 Panama	1.70%	4
14769 Portland	1.28%	3
14775 Ripley	0.85%	2
14135 Sheridan	0.43%	1
14781 Sherman	0.00%	0
14136 Silver Creek	3.40%	8
14782 Sinclairville	0.85%	2
14138 South Dayton	0.43%	1
14784 Stockton	0.00%	0
14785 Stow	0.00%	0
14787 Westfield	3.40%	8
Other (please specify)	2.55%	6

Participants were also located in 14722 (Chautauqua), 14742 Greenhurst, 14206 (Buffalo), 14772 (Randolph), 16749 (Smethport, PA), and 14743 (Hinsdale).

What is your opinion about the availability of these services in Chautauqua County?



Please rate the availability of the following services/ opportunities for children and youth in Chautauqua County from your experience:



How many people live in your household?

	Percentage	Number
One	8.09%	19
Two	30.64%	72
Three	22.13%	52
Four	19.15%	45
Five	14.04%	33
Six or more	5.96%	14

Do you rent or own your home?

	Percentage	Number
Rent	28.51%	67
Own	69.79%	164
Currently homeless/ staying with someone else	1.70%	4

Please choose the family type that best describes your household (adults are defined as age 18 and over).

	Percentage	Number
I live alone	8.09%	19
One adult, plus one or more children	15.74%	37
Two adults, plus one or more children	38.72%	91
Two adults, no children	22.13%	52
Three or more adults, no children	8.09%	19
Three or more adults, plus one or more children	7.23%	17

What race do you consider yourself?

	Percentage	Number
White or Caucasian	89.36%	210
Black or African American	2.55%	6
Asian	0.85%	2
Native American	0.43%	1
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.85%	2
Some other race	2.55%	6
Two or more races	3.40%	8

Are you Hispanic?

	Percentage	Number
No	91.49%	215
Yes	8.51%	20

What is your gender?

	Percentage	Number
Female	85.11%	200
Male	12.77%	30
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	2.13%	5

What is your age?

	Percentage	Number
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	4.26%	10
25-34	17.87%	42
35-44	27.23%	64
45-54	27.23%	64
55-64	15.74%	37
65+	7.66%	18

Appendix II: Commentary by COI

Board of Directors

INTRODUCTION

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. must adhere to national standards as a Community Action Agency that include a tripartite Board of Directors. This means that the Board must be made up in equal parts of representatives of the public sector (elected officials), private sector (the business community) and target sector (low-income people or organizations that serve them). At their Retreat in July 2022, COI's Board of Directors broke into small groups to discuss the following issues relevant to Chautauqua County residents. The following is a summary of those discussions.

RESULTS

Many businesses in Chautauqua County are having difficulty finding employees. Why do you think this is a problem? What can businesses do to help the situation?

- Enhanced benefits (SNAP, HEAP, rental subsidies, unemployment benefits) that were provided during the Covid pandemic had an impact on workers' willingness or need to go to work.
- The lack of access to childcare, which was already a problem, was exacerbated by the pandemic as many providers were forced to close, some of them permanently.
- Childcare for 2nd and 3rd shifts is almost non-existent.
- Parents must weigh the high cost of childcare with the amount of potential earnings. In some cases, there is little or no benefit to working.
- Employers who pay minimum wages are forced to compete for workers with companies paying higher wages for jobs that have traditionally been lower paying.
- Many jobs require skills that are in short supply in the local population.
- Employers could offer on-site childcare to address the problem.

- Programs to train workers in skills that are in-demand are needed.

What do you think are the major causes of homelessness in Chautauqua County? What can be done locally to prevent or address homelessness?

- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Financial problems; loss of employment
- Domestic abuse
- Code violations/substandard and unsafe housing
- Rent increases/lack of affordable housing
- Divorce or other family issues
- Incarceration/those leaving incarceration with no place to go
- Health problems/high health care bills

What do you think are the greatest challenges for families needing childcare?

- High cost of care
- Availability
- Reliability
- Quality

Why does Chautauqua County have a shortage of childcare providers?

- Strict regulations
- Closings due to Covid
- Low financial return/low wages for providers
- High financial obligation
- Small qualified workforce
- Undervalued childcare providers

What do you think is the best way to prevent the mass shooting situations that are plaguing the country? Do you think Chautauqua County is vulnerable to such an attack?

- Chautauqua County is vulnerable to such an event. The shooter in Buffalo in May 2022 came from a small community outside of the local area.
- Laws should be passed to ban semi-automatic weapons outside of the military and law enforcement.
- More education is needed in the community and in schools on de-escalation techniques, emotional regulation, communication, and working out conflicts.
- Families should be trained on gun safety if a gun is in the home.
- Lock up guns that are in the home.
- Deal with bullying in the schools and intervene early for potential violent acts.
- Online monitoring and reporting of warning signs.

Why do you think Chautauqua County has high rates of alcohol and substance abuse?

- Poverty
- Availability/easy access to drugs
- Alcohol has been normalized
- Lack of job opportunities or education
- Mental health issues/self-medicating
- Lack of strong support systems
- Lack of things to do for the young population
- Generational substance abusers
- Trauma (family or otherwise)
- Need for mentoring
- Peer pressure adults and children

What is needed to combat the problem?

- Early intervention
- Mentoring and other resources
- More education and prevention efforts in the schools

What are the biggest challenges for someone looking for employment in Chautauqua County?

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Minimum educational requirements for some positions
- Language barriers for non-English speaking individuals
- Lack of experience or specialized skills
- Inability to pass a background check or drug test
- Substance abuse issues
- Need for technical training and apprenticeships
- Mental health issues

Appendix III: Community Council

INTRODUCTION

COI hosts Community Council meetings on a quarterly basis that are open to the public. Participants of the virtual Community Council meeting on August 11, 2022 were asked to discuss the following issues, and their comments are summarized. The meeting was attended by 45 community residents and COI staff members.

RESULTS

1. What barriers have you faced while looking for childcare?

- Cost
- Scheduling for work schedules that change from week to week
- Hours of operation
- Quality, reliability, availability
- Location
- Spots for infants
- Care for children with disabilities (i.e. nonverbal autistic child)
- Childcare centers don't have staffing to be open longer hours

2. If you have not been able to find adequate childcare, what is the impact on your family?

- Not able to work
- Less income, financial struggles, economic support
- Would cost more than I make to find someone to care for my child with a disability
- There is a greater impact on women, who often can't go to work if they don't have childcare.

3. What health care issues are you most concerned about? (Access to health care, access to affordable health insurance, mental health, food, transportation, other).

- Calling for crisis/ mental services, I get passed around from person to person
- For substance abuse, the only option is Jamestown hospital
- Can't afford treatment/ hospital care
- Not enough beds for mental health crisis
- Affordable health care, affordable prescriptions
- Substance abuse is a huge issue locally
- Mental health - a single mother can't leave her kids to go seek treatment
- Need something in-between in-patient services and having once a week check-ins
- There are Al-anon and AA meetings in Jamestown
- A lot of kids go without help at crucial times in their development

4. If you have not been able to find adequate childcare, what is the impact on your family?

- Can't find reliable in-home help for mother with advanced Alzheimer's to keep her at home

5. Do you believe that the services for mental health are adequate in our county? If not, please explain what resources would be helpful.

- The only place to get a diagnosis for pediatric neurodevelopment is Robert Warner Center (at Oishei Children's Center)
- There are few places that accept Medicaid for

mental health

- Need for providers who “meet you where you’re at”, such as for people with anxiety, depression
- More help for kids is needed, since it is a crazy world we now live in
- UPMC has counseling over the phone, which made it easier
- Telemed is wonderful, eliminates the need for transportation
- There is a stigma with mental health - still not talked about enough

6. Have you or someone you know struggled with any form of addiction?

- Nicotine
- Alcohol
- Heroin
- Gambling - person doesn’t think there is help available
- Lost two people in a week from drugs and alcohol addictions
- The Fatherhood Program has had dads that go into rehab; there is some help in the county jail; need for supports in the community to keep them sober when they get out.
- Need more help, more education
- Addicted person has to want help

7. Have you or someone you know struggled with any form of addiction?

- Funding a location to rent at a reasonable rate
- Finding the real estate; affordable payments
- Selling a product that would be profitable in our area

- Knowledge of how to go about it
- Competition with national and international businesses
- The cost of getting all that you need to start out
- Local codes set by village/town/city boards that affect where a business can operate

8. What types of new businesses would be beneficial to the community?

- Child care
- Large industry that would create employment opportunities
- Cutting edge technology
- Places for kids to have fun, like the Children’s Gym
- Local connection between farm products and consumers, in addition to Farmer’s Markets
- Local transportation
- Affordable family venues
- Department stores
- Farm to table restaurant

9. Do you have concerns regarding the current rental market or housing conditions?

- Local housing is becoming big business for out-of-town investors
- Rents are too high
- There has been a big jump in rents in a short period of time
- A lot of student housing in Fredonia is vacant
- Owners don’t care about the condition of rental housing
- Need more transitional housing for people coming out of prison

10. How concerned are you about the presence of lead-based paint in your house?

- Lead based paint is present in a lot of homes; many build before the late 70's when lead was banned
- The local housing stock is very old
- Two-year old had lead level 3 times more than the threshold (there are no safe levels of lead)

11. What are the biggest factors holding you back from pursuing homeownership?

- Credit score
- Seller's market currently
- Difficult to save for a down payment, especially when rents are high
- Over priced homes
- Closing costs, taxes
- Takes a long time in NYS for the process